

**REPORT OF PROCEEDINGS BEFORE**

**STANDING COMMITTEE ON SOCIAL ISSUES**

**INQUIRY INTO PUBLIC DISTURBANCES AT MACQUARIE  
FIELDS**

---

**At Sydney on Friday 7 April 2006**

---

**The Committee met at 9.30 a.m.**

---

**PRESENT**

The Hon. J. C. Burnswoods (Chair)

The Hon. Dr A. Chesterfield-Evans

The Hon. K. F. Griffin

The Hon. R. M. Parker

The Hon. I. W. West

**GREGORY JOSEPH STEWART**, Acting Chief Executive Officer, Sydney South West Area Health Service, Locked Bag BC1871, Liverpool,

**DAVID ANTHONY McGRATH**, Director, Mental Health and Drug and Alcohol Programs, Department of Health, 73 Miller Street, North Sydney,

**AMANDA MAREE LARKIN**, General Manager, Sydney South West Area Health Service (Macarthur), Campbelltown, sworn and examined:

**CHAIR:** Did you receive the questions that were sent to you?

**Dr STEWART:** Yes.

**CHAIR:** I will start off with some of those questions, but I am sure members of the Committee will have others and there will be matters arising out of them. The first question asks you to give the Committee an overview of the department's activities and programs in south-west Sydney—obviously, from the Committee's point of view, focusing on the ones that target or deal with Macquarie Fields and its people; the challenges that face the area; and exactly where the services that are relevant are located.

**Dr STEWART:** I might start. The Government's submission, at page 31, has the health component, so I will not go through all that. I should just clarify in relation to point 3.6.4 on page 33, there is an existing mental health facility at Campbelltown Hospital that is not listed in the first dot point at 3.6.4. It is a 30-bed acute psychiatric unit. It must have just slipped off when we prepared this. There is a new 20-bed non-acute unit that has just been constructed—the building is not yet quite finished—and there is an adolescent service, Gna Ka Lun. That just needed clarification, because clearly mental health services have been an issue in some of the Committee's previous hearings.

I suppose in general Sydney South West Area Health Service is big now, the biggest in New South Wales, with 1.3 million people and a budget of about \$2 billion. The area has nine out of the 10 most disadvantaged postcodes in New South Wales, according to the Australian Bureau of Statistics and Research listing. One of those is Macquarie Fields, it is eighth out of the ten, but there are several others—Miller, for example. I think Airds is in that. I am pretty sure Minto is, as is Bradbury and Riverwood, and probably both Redfern and Waterloo. The area health service is acutely aware of its responsibilities in relation to those kinds of areas, where there is socioeconomic disadvantage.

We take an approach of providing services in an integrated and networked way. Some of that is covered in the submission, and some we are quite happy to talk about as well. For example, we have an area-wide drug health service that provides services across the area and to the residents of Macquarie Fields, and we have an area-wide mental health service that does the same thing. It provides services to the residents across the area and Campbelltown and Macquarie Fields. The amalgamation of the two previous areas has meant that for the last year we have been working hard in the integration of services that used to exist between two older areas. But a year down the track, I think that has actually seen some quiet good rewards.

For example, in relation to mental health there is much more support now from the mental health services at the eastern end of our area—at Rozelle hospital and Prince Alfred and Concord hospitals—than there was before when the two areas were different, when south-western Sydney started at Bankstown and went down to the southern highlands. That support includes the appointment of a single Director of Mental Health across the area health service and we have also appointed a single Director of Drug Health across the area. The amalgamation has led to some opportunities that were not there before, in terms of services supporting each other across the area. But, all amalgamations take time to put in place. I think we are now at a point where—I suppose "going forward" is the right word, but I dislike using the term—we can go forward with a system in place so that some of the issues in drug health and mental health that we see will be able to be addressed.

In relation to drug health and mental health there are issues across the city, New South Wales and Australia. We have seen some announcements in relation to mental health, from both the Australian Government and the New South Wales Government, in recent times. We recognise, in

Sydney South West Area Health Service, and the Department recognises— but David will be able to comment more on this that I can—that we need to continually improve the services we are providing to people with mental health issues. We have seen some increases in attendances at Campbelltown Hospital, which Amanda might comment on, of people with acute mental health problems. But, as I say, those are being addressed by some increased resourcing. There is a new unit at Campbelltown—and a new unit at Liverpool has just been opened, which expanded our beds as well.

The last point I want to make is that health is not just about the health system or hospitals; health is broader than that. When we are talking about health we do take the view that issues around urban planning, housing and transport are just as important for health in the broad sense—the kind of World Health Organisation sense of complete emotional, social and physical well-being; not just the absence of illness. That is why this whole-of-government approach to issues in Macquarie Fields and more generally is one that we obviously support completely.

**CHAIR:** Question 2 addresses those areas particularly and the specific strategies. Mr McGrath, would you like to add to what Dr Stewart has said?

**Mr McGRATH:** Obviously we fund area health services on the basis of area health services and not on local government areas [LGAs], so I cannot comment specifically on the Macquarie Fields LGA with regard to prevalence rates. There is some evidence that there are higher rates of tobacco smoking in the old Sydney south-west, but there is also evidence that people in the old Sydney south-west are less likely to engage in significant risk drinking behaviour than those in other parts of the State. There is also evidence that people in the old Sydney south-west have a higher score on the K10, which is our measure of psychosocial distress, than the State average. That is some general information around prevalence rates surrounding mental health, and drug and alcohol in the old Sydney south-west area. To give you some idea of the current programs that are being rolled out on mental health on a statewide basis, which will provide you with some idea of the sort of strategies we are working towards, you probably are aware that there has been a significant expansion of the mental health program over the past couple of years, and that is likely to continue.

The sorts of programs we are rolling out are an increase in emergency care services and there is a psychiatric and emergency care unit at Liverpool Hospital. That program has been expanded across the State, and that is bringing the focus on the impact of people with mental health, and drug and alcohol problems in emergency departments and providing more specialised care for those people in emergency departments. We have expanded a program called the Housing and Supported Accommodation Initiative, which involves funding non-government organisations [NGOs] to go into public housing estates where people with mental health problems have been provided with tenancies to assist them with their psychosocial support and rehabilitation. We have seen some good outcomes from the early stages of that program, and we are looking to expand that further. We are expanding our non-acute units. As Dr Stewart pointed out, there is a non-acute unit to open soon at Campbelltown. We currently are working on a broad community mental health strategy, which will be released shortly and will interface with the outcomes of the Council of Australian Governments [COAG], which we are expecting to hear about in June—the next Council of Australia Governments meeting. That is a broad overview of some of the mental health initiatives that are in train. I am happy to provide you with any further detail that you might be interested in.

**The Hon. Dr ARTHUR CHESTERFIELD-EVANS:** It is interesting that you were called here, in the sense that we have a riot and we call the doctor. It says something about the medicalisation, in a way, of social problems, does it not?

**Dr STEWART:** Do you mean me, personally, as a doctor? I am here as a chief executive. I might be—

**The Hon. Dr ARTHUR CHESTERFIELD-EVANS:** No. When I say "you" I mean the health system. Give me a break.

**The Hon. IAN WEST:** Arthur is here as a politician.

**The Hon. Dr ARTHUR CHESTERFIELD-EVANS:** No, I am here as a social crusader.

**Dr STEWART:** But we recognise that when it comes to the specific issues that we are very involved in, in the response to Macquarie Fields and the Government action plan, those being drug health and mental health, that we have a core role. My earlier comments that health is more than just the health system still stand. In a lot of ways the response to Macquarie Fields, as the committee has heard, is not at heart a health response, it is a response around community, housing, policing and how communities work. But we recognise that there are two areas where we have a particular interest coming out of the Government action plan. However, that is not to say that the services we provide to Macquarie Fields or to Campbelltown as a whole are only those services. We provide a broad range of services in Campbelltown through a network of hospitals and community health centres—I did not talk about committee health centres, but I will—that include oral health, child and family services, counselling, community nursing, the whole range of community services.

So far as community health centres are concerned I notice there was a comment earlier about Campbelltown health centre closing and that is true, because it was a building that was no longer habitable. There were too many occupational health issues so we relocated all the staff to the three other community centres in the general Campbelltown area, one of which is at Ingleburn, the suburb next to Macquarie Fields, and the other two are at Narellan and Rosemeadow. We run integrated community health services from those three centres. I do not think it is a fair critique, if there was one, that closing Campbelltown Community Health Centre had any impact on the community health services we can provide. To go right back to your question, Dr Chesterfield-Evans, yes, we are involved, but we are involved in the way I have described and that is the way we are happy to be involved. We are very happy to be involved in an across-government approach. We are involved in just the same way in Redfern-Waterloo. We are very involved in the human services planning at Redfern-Waterloo and, in some ways, similar kinds of issues, similar kinds of demographics.

**The Hon. Dr ARTHUR CHESTERFIELD-EVANS:** It is nice to have you fessing up to things when I did not ask them. The health system has been criticised for medicalising a lot of things, and once it has medicalised the doctor end the spectrum gets all the money and then with the doctor spectrum intensive care gets all the money. In a sense the acute and medical things get much more support than the community-based things, which you have mentioned, but not elaborated on. How many full-time equivalent drug and alcohol workers do you have per 100,000, how many psychiatrists and psychologists do you have per 100,000 and how does that compare to the State average and if you are seen as an area of greater need you probably should have more? How does that stack up against what you have?

**Dr STEWART:** As a consequence of Mr Gellatly's evidence there was a request and certainly at that time we provided some answers to those questions on notice, but I do not have them with me. I cannot answer the detail of that. We provided information about how many drug workers there were and so on and so forth.

**CHAIR:** If you like, you can take it on notice.

**The Hon. Dr ARTHUR CHESTERFIELD-EVANS:** If it is in my file I will have to refresh myself later.

**CHAIR:** There may be something more specific arising out of it that could be added.

**Dr STEWART:** I can say, and Ms Larkin will correct me if I am wrong, but the full-time equivalent community health staff, taking a broader view, is 168 in Macarthur and I do not think that includes mental health or drug and alcohol, which is on top of that. The community health budget is \$14 million or \$15 million. The 168 staff consist of community nurses—there are probably 30 of them—speech pathology services, childhood nurses and a whole range of—

**The Hon. Dr ARTHUR CHESTERFIELD-EVANS:** What is the community health staff classification broken into? In Queensland speech pathologists are under education. So in a sense it is a bit of a fudge there.

**Ms LARKIN:** I will just explain the structure. Based on the restructure that has occurred across the area we have some groupings of staff —mental health staff, the drug and alcohol staff—and then we have more generalist community health staff, the primary health nurses, allied health staff,

and early childhood baby health sisters. That is in the 165 who cover the Macarthur area separate to drug and alcohol and mental health, who are on top of that.

**The Hon. Dr ARTHUR CHESTERFIELD-EVANS:** The old baby health centres are called early childhood development. They are not related to running any of the kindergartens are they? There are some DOCS kindergartens but they are not from you, are they?

**Ms LARKIN:** No. But those services are linked very closely with the NGOs who may be involved in it or the services that are run through the Department of Community Services. So there are close linkages and co-ordination at a grassroots level with those services.

**The Hon. Dr ARTHUR CHESTERFIELD-EVANS:** Do they share premises?

**Ms LARKIN:** I do not think they do in Macquarie Fields. In other parts of Macarthur they do.

**The Hon. Dr ARTHUR CHESTERFIELD-EVANS:** Our early childhood development report suggested that there should be visiting of all parents.

**Ms LARKIN:** The Families First program I think you are referring to.

**The Hon. Dr ARTHUR CHESTERFIELD-EVANS:** Yes. That was not a universal program until recently.

**CHAIR:** When we did the inquiry home visiting was just starting.

**Ms LARKIN:** That is the program under which, after the birth, mums—

**The Hon. Dr ARTHUR CHESTERFIELD-EVANS:** Yes. Is that universal in your area?

**Ms LARKIN:** Yes. The families of all babies who are delivered at Macarthur—they are all at Campbelltown at the moment—are followed up within about seven days after the birth. Then there is an ongoing service to them after that time. The Families First program was implemented across Macarthur. That is done in conjunction with some programs the Department of Community Services implemented at the same time.

**The Hon. Dr ARTHUR CHESTERFIELD-EVANS:** What percentage of mothers would have ongoing connection with that program?

**Ms LARKIN:** I could not give you a percentage. Remember, the early childhood program works by the mums coming back to the centres over a number of months to see the nurses in those centres. They are also referred off into other support services either within health or to non-government agencies that we link with. I could not give the percentage of the numbers that take it up. I would need to take it on notice.

**CHAIR:** The visiting applies for second and later babies; it is not only first babies. So in effect there is ongoing contact with the older children in the household.

**Ms LARKIN:** Yes. Remember, because of the issues in Macquarie Fields there are a number of high-risk families. Following the disturbances there had been a level of co-ordination but quite a specific group was set up where we look at it across agencies, across DOCS. Police also have a strong representation there. We are there and there is also another agency that is involved. We look at families that we consider at very high risk and need interagency involvement to maintain them and support them in the community. So there is a range of things that we have put in place for those families.

**Dr STEWART:** This is the next phase of Families First led by DOCS. I do not know whether DOCS gave evidence on that when it was before the Committee. The universal home visiting program involves one visit for each infant. That occurs across Sydney South West Area. South-western Sydney was one of the first areas to have home visiting but now it has been extended across

the Area. Early childhood nurses, the baby health nurses, now have quite a different role from what they had even five or ten years ago. There is a lot more in-the-home work.

**Ms LARKIN:** Could I just add that the rate of that first home visiting within the seven-day period from Macarthur is very high. Around 90 per cent get that home visit. With the at-risk families—a significant proportion of the families in Macquarie Fields are Aboriginal families—we have moved one of the early childhood nurses to Aboriginal health to support Aboriginal families so that more home visiting and support can be done for them too. So we have tried to diversify it to target those at-risk families.

**The Hon. Dr ARTHUR CHESTERFIELD-EVANS:** Does the Department of Health do things with school truancy or is that all the education department and/or DOCS?

**Ms LARKIN:** The submission put in by Health lists the services. We ran some programs with the schools about two years ago on truancy and all the issues associated with that. We do not currently have a program working but we do work in conjunction with the high schools on general health-related issues, but that is more specifically with the education department.

**The Hon. Dr ARTHUR CHESTERFIELD-EVANS:** What are youth-related issues in high schools?

**Ms LARKIN:** Things like drug abuse. We will work with the schools. Based in Campbelltown we have what is called Traxside, which is our youth health program that a lot of local kids and schools link up with.

**Dr STEWART:** The next phase for home visiting is—this is the short description—sustained home visiting. There is a bit of debate among the experts about whether that is the right term. That involves identification of families that would benefit from more than just one visit. For a couple of years in Campbelltown—mostly in Airds—we have had the program Amanda just mentioned of visiting by Aboriginal staff of families within the Campbelltown area, linked very closely to Tharawal Aboriginal Medical Service, which we have a partnership agreement with. That whole sustained home visiting area is the next phase of the Families First program.

**Ms LARKIN:** You get that first visit after mum and bub and if they are concerned about you they will continue a couple of more visits. Then if significant concerns are raised home visiting will be put in place for an extended period and evaluated to see the impact.

**Mr McGRATH:** Going back to the question on truancy, we have a School Link initiative, a joint project from the Department of Health and the department of education, which provides a framework and structure for facilitating relationships between child and adolescent mental health services, schools and TAFEs. There are area co-ordinators in each area health service for the School Link project to assist in providing training for school counsellors and so on around identifying mental health problems and also providing liaison so that there is cross-referral back from schools where the children may be identified as being problematic to child and adolescent mental health services.

**The Hon. Dr ARTHUR CHESTERFIELD-EVANS:** Does that exist in primary schools as well? I gather that if you do not catch them in primary then you have a hell of a battle in—

**Mr McGRATH:** It operates across the whole gamut of the responsibilities of the department of education.

**CHAIR:** Is adolescent risk-taking behaviour and potential youth suicide a big issue in Macquarie Fields or the Macarthur area compared with in other areas?

**Ms LARKIN:** I do not know whether I can single out Macquarie Fields. In terms of at-risk behaviours and a whole range of antisocial behaviours there is a percentage of that very much so in the Macarthur area. Whether Macquarie Fields is the worse—

**CHAIR:** It is probably better to talk of the Macarthur area anyhow.

**Ms LARKIN:** Yes. If you look at the range of programs that have been put in place—I am sure the police spoke to it—the youth liaison person that they have put in place has a very good relationship with the community at Macquarie Fields and is very much involved in the co-ordination committee. We link closely with them around those kind of things and a range of strategies has been put in place. Whether it is any greater in comparison I cannot tell you.

**The Hon. Dr ARTHUR CHESTERFIELD-EVANS:** What percentage of your health budget is spent on community health as opposed to hospital-based stuff? Perhaps you would like to take that on notice to give a more detailed breakdown or can you give us a ballpark figure?

**Dr STEWART:** In general, we would be the same as the other area health services in New South Wales.

**The Hon. Dr ARTHUR CHESTERFIELD-EVANS:** That is not reassuring.

**Dr STEWART:** The figures for New South Wales will apply to us. Because the State Government funds hospitals and the Federal Government funds the primary medical care, you have to remember that a figure of approximately 90 or a few more per cent of acute services is an expected figure. That is the principal service that State Governments funds—hospital services—and that is what the Australian Health Care Agreement says. Community health would probably be 5, 6, 7, and population health—immunisation and doing health promotion—would be 2 or 3, in common with most other area health services—in fact, in common with expenditure around Australia.

I saw a population and public health, health protection and health promotion, expenditure report out from AIHW just a couple of weeks ago which said that approximately 2 or 2.5 per cent of the health budget in Australia, \$60 billion, is spent on population health activities. New South Wales is pretty well on that level. That does not recognise, of course, the individual patient care encounters. There is obviously a health promotion and health protection component of that. When a doctor bills Medicare, that does not count as public health expenditure, to use public health in a more technical sense. It counts as acute service expenditure.

**The Hon. Dr ARTHUR CHESTERFIELD-EVANS:** That is probably reasonable in most cases, I would say.

**Dr STEWART:** There are a lot of things happening, though, in our area and in other areas about trying to get better, what we call, integrated primary care or integrated primary care and community health, and to develop centres where there are better opportunities for co-location of our staff and general practitioners—and even, for that matter, private providers' community services, allied health and so on. There has been a lot of discussion happening in the past six months within the health system about that, the integrated primary care centre model. It does offer some opportunities for co-location, co-location for better integration, if that is the right word, or just better liaison between general practice and our community health services.

It is a fair critique that in the 30 years since community health services started, the barrier between general practice and community health remains to some extent—not as much as it was when I first started or community health started when, you know, the Australian Medical Association in New South Wales, for example, took the view that community health centres were competition. So there are a lot of things happening about that. It has been well recognised in the last few years that the development of primary health care can avoid hospital admissions and can lead to improvements in opportunities for health promotion or health protection, but this is an ongoing struggle. This is at the heart of how we keep the population of Australia healthy.

**The Hon. Dr ARTHUR CHESTERFIELD-EVANS:** Or not. If the community-based services are the responsibility of the Federal Government, how good is liaison? What do they provide? How good is liaison with them?

**Dr STEWART:** Obviously, Medicare is the funder for general practice services, general medical services. There have been some expansions recently. There have been psychology and some allied health items created in the last couple of years. On-the-ground community health services, as we have been talking about up until now, come out of the State budget. Originally, that was specific

funding back in the Whitlam era. The community health centres that we know—for example, the one, say, at Redfern, for example, which I know well, or Marrickville, were all established at around that time, the mid-seventies, by specific grants, and now that is picked up in the Australian Health Care Agreement. We fund it, and the health system funds it. So, we fund that side of it and we fund the range of services that we have talked about before—mental health services in the community, drug and alcohol, primary care nursing, early childhood nursing, counselling services. Some allied health services are very—

**The Hon. Dr ARTHUR CHESTERFIELD-EVANS:** What is the Federal Government doing?

**Dr STEWART:** Then we get into a discussion about the Australian Health Care Agreement, and I do not know if the Committee wants necessarily to go into that.

**CHAIR:** No. We are getting a fair way away from our terms of reference.

**Dr STEWART:** They are certainly funding all the general practice services that are provided. Whilst my comments before about better liaison apply, there is lots of liaison between general practice and our community health services, and lots of referrals coming back and forward and use of community health, much more so than was the case when community health first started 30 years ago.

**The Hon. Dr ARTHUR CHESTERFIELD-EVANS:** If you have a kid truanting, you know, like the one who crashed the car at Macquarie Fields, to come back to our terms of reference, it is drawing the longbow to say that the Commonwealth spending on general practice will fix the problem, is it not? It really has to come back to identification of kids at risk, and so on. When I asked what the Commonwealth is doing, you say that you are basically hospital based and therefore you are only spending a relatively small percentage of the health budget of the services because it is a Commonwealth responsibility. Now you are kind of saying that the Commonwealth does not do much and we do most of it under the Australian Health Care Agreement. We seem to have a situation where it would seem that less is being done than might be done, and it is the traditional Commonwealth-State divide, is it not?

**Dr STEWART:** But we live in a federation. I did not quite say that we do not do community health. I said that predominantly the State health system runs acute services. That is the split. Predominately, in terms of the Federal Government's role, it is general medical practice. But we provide a lot of community health services, as I have said.

**The Hon. Dr ARTHUR CHESTERFIELD-EVANS:** But the Commonwealth is not providing community health except in terms of the Medicare agreement. Is that right? What I am thinking is that they do a bit of HAAC and aged and disability care does some.

**Dr STEWART:** Yes.

**CHAIR:** Arthur, we have our next witnesses starting in 10 minutes and we have a lot of other questions to ask. Some of this you might be able to talk to Dr Stewart about and get the breakdowns and so on later, but the Hon. Robyn Parker wants to move on to some of the other areas.

**The Hon. ROBYN PARKER:** One of the significant factors in our Redfern-Waterloo inquiry was about a lack of co-ordination between services. The human services review that was undertaken at the time in that area I guess taught some lessons in terms of co-ordination. I wonder if any of those lessons learned from that review have made any changes to the way in which NSW Health operates, and if any of those strategies could be applied from the Macquarie Fields riot situation?

**Dr STEWART:** I think we are. Obviously, there was a more formal structure after the Redfern riots in the establishment of an authority. But there are particular issues in Redfern around parts of Redfern, the Block and Aboriginal populations, that led to that decision being made. Then the Redfern-Waterloo Authority then went about creating a human services plan. We have been very involved in this. There are several actions arising from that that are for our area health service—



similar kinds of action, as I said before. It has been a whole-of-government approach. It has put in place mechanisms for better co-ordination among the government sector organisations and non-government organisations in a formal way.

What happened after Macquarie Fields was similar but not in the sense that it set up a separate authority. The kind of co-ordination that is occurring through the Redfern-Waterloo Authority is exactly the kind of co-ordination that is occurring through the groups that have been formed and were already existing, at any rate in Campbelltown in relation to Macquarie Fields, about how do we better identify problems at the local level and how do we address them in a co-ordinated way between the sectors. The discussion up until now just shows how complicated it is. What is DOCS responsibility? When does it become our responsibility? When is truancy our responsibility?

I go back to the question that the Hon. Dr Arthur Chesterfield-Evans asked at the start: why do we always call the doctor. Well, we do not. There is a whole range of responsibilities that have been identified. The mechanism for doing that is very similar to the mechanism in Redfern-Waterloo but not with a formal structure.

**The Hon. ROBYN PARKER:** So you have not made any specific changes in the way in which it operates since the Macquarie Fields riot?

**Dr STEWART:** In relation to the health system, we operate through a network of services that provide community health to the people of Campbelltown and to Macquarie Fields. We have hospitals that provide those services. We have mental health and drug health services. We continue to provide those services as part of the processes of the Government action plan. We are identifying—and Amanda Larkin might want to comment on this—a better what we call in-reach service with Macquarie Fields specifically. But again I go back to something that I said at the start. In an area where there are 9 out of 10 of the most disadvantaged postcode areas in New South Wales, we do that in other areas as well—Riverwood, Minto, Miller—and all the time we are thinking about how to better provide services and change the model. Amanda might want to comment about some things that are happening.

**Ms LARKIN:** I will respond in terms of co-ordination. A couple of things were set up specifically after the Macquarie Fields disturbances. A fairly senior group was set up to look at how the agencies interface and to ensure that we had decision-makers around the table who could make some changes. They developed a draft plan, which is in the papers. We also established a local implementation group a couple of months after that. We had decision-makers and people on the ground working closely together.

**The Hon. ROBYN PARKER:** Did that involve NGOs as well?

**Ms LARKIN:** Yes. However, what was also really important—and this is the important point I would like to make—is that it involved community people. One of the important strategies around working with these kinds of communities is that historically NSW Health and a lot of other government agencies have been very much about doing "to" the community or doing "for" the community. That is the language used. These communities do not want that. We have shown time and again that those strategies do not work. This is about the community taking the ownership. They are very nice motherhood statements, but they are very true in terms of the capacity of the community to make the changes themselves. The agencies need to work with the communities. On that group there were some very strong community people and some good, strong NGOs.

**The Hon. ROBYN PARKER:** Cutting through the motherhood statements and bureaucratic speak, what were they saying they wanted to change and have done?

**Ms LARKIN:** Honourable members will notice that the main focus of the plan was safety. Irrespective of the disturbances and the issues with police at that time, there were things around safety. A key issue was having a community place where people could come and meet and make community decisions about changes in their neighbourhood. At the early meetings the key issues were safety and a meeting place. They moved very quickly to get them addressed. Housing identified a house that Campbelltown City Council was going to support and modify. They were strong about addressing

those key issues. The other issue was the youth and what we could do to support and build the capacity and self-esteem of youth in the local community.

**The Hon. ROBYN PARKER:** Has that translated into any action? Young people have spoken to us who have been bashing their heads against a brick wall to get a skate park, or anything. It appeared that there was nothing for them to do out there. For years one particular young person, who was very impressive, said that he had been trying to get a skate park and nothing had happened. Has all the talk and discussion translated into specific action for young people?

**Ms LARKIN:** My sense around those meetings has very much been that what they have tried to do is to work with some of the programs already in place, but also to introduce some new programs. The submission contained a very strong presentation from the Australian Football League about doing some work with youth on those training programs, doing some things at different levels, but also strong engagement with council to look at things like the skate park. That is why the key decision-makers were there at the original meetings. The message was, "We have talked about it. Can we move it; can we get it going?" They moved quickly to get the meeting place and set up local committees and so on. I think there was a strong commitment to get those things going and moving.

**The Hon. ROBYN PARKER:** Mr McGrath, the Federal Government has just massively boosted mental health funding. How do you see that relating to your area and what sorts of initiatives happen in your area? What sorts of things does the State Government need to provide in mental health in your area and what pressure are you applying to have that funding matched?

**Mr McGRATH:** At the moment, coming out of the Council of Australian Governments process, a national action plan is being developed that is due to be completed by June. All jurisdictions are working on that plan with the Commonwealth Government. The detail in terms of how the dollars that were announced will be rolled out is being negotiated as part of that national action plan. The State's interface with those dollars is still being negotiated, so it is difficult for me to answer until agreement is reached on the outcomes.

**The Hon. ROBYN PARKER:** Do you have a wish list for the area in terms of mental health, drugs and alcohol?

**Mr McGRATH:** Drugs and alcohol are unlikely to be involved given the focus of the national action plan at this stage—

**The Hon. ROBYN PARKER:** So it does not deal with people with complex needs?

**Mr McGRATH:** As I was just going to say—other than dealing with the co-morbidities that particularly come with cannabis and amphetamine use, which I am sure has been a focus in the announcement made by John Howard. Undoubtedly that will be a component of what comes out of the project, and it is a worthwhile component as a focus area. There will be a range of things looking at the interfaces between the two sets of services provided by the two governments and improving the co-ordination of services between the primary care and the tertiary care sectors. They will be beneficial things. There will be a range of things looking at community mental health programs and they will also be beneficial. The national action plan is definitely heading in the right direction.

**The Hon. ROBYN PARKER:** I agree, but what is the wish list for your area? What will you be looking for either the Federal Government or the State Government to provide?

**Dr STEWART:** Mr McGrath is from NSW Health and I am sure he knows the answer to this, but I will answer on behalf of the area. As far as drug health is concerned, honourable members should not forget that there has been a major enhancement in drug services across New South Wales since the Drug Summit. That is a fact; millions more is being spent on drug health than was spent until 1999. It is noticeable across all areas; there is a much better and expanded provision of services in relation to pharmacotherapies.

Of course, the issue of co-morbidity and dual diagnosis is incredibly vexed and will have to be addressed through the process that Mr McGrath has just described. However, leaving that aside, in terms of mental health, these issues around provision of services for mental health, as we have seen

because of government announcements, are now becoming key priorities. The issue for us as service providers is to ensure that we deliver the best services. At the moment in south-west Sydney we have issues around demand for mental health services—there is no question about that—as do other parts of New South Wales and Australia. That is being addressed by the kind of things I referred to: a new mental health unit at Liverpool Hospital, additional beds there, additional beds at Campbelltown and enhanced community services.

I do not think the model needs to change; I think we need to keep building the model we have. By and large, the provision of mental health services across New South Wales has been done with the right model. One might argue that there should be more inpatient, rehabilitation or non-acute beds. Those arguments can be had. However, the general model is the one that we will be working on and enhancing given the announcements.

**CHAIR:** I think we will conclude at this point.

**Dr STEWART:** In terms of the detail of the government action plan, section 6.6 of the Government's submission, on page 66, contains all the detail the Committee needs to know in relation to the kinds of things discussed locally in developing the plan. That includes the discussions with the communities and the actions arising from that. That is what we are doing. Obviously, those things have not been completed. The plan was published only in October, but we are working on it. It includes things like access to recreational facilities and all the other issues we have discussed here today.

**CHAIR:** Mr McGrath, you appeared before the Committee when it was conducting an inquiry into the Inebriates Act. It would be good for the Committee to hear of some progress in that area. Perhaps you can take that on notice.

**Mr McGRATH:** Certainly.

**CHAIR:** Even though it is not the Committee's specific role, honourable members always like to follow up earlier reports and see what is happening.

**The Hon. Dr ARTHUR CHESTERFIELD-EVANS:** It is distressing not to follow up Campbelltown Hospital, too.

**Ms LARKIN:** Would you like me to take that on notice, too?

**The Hon. Dr ARTHUR CHESTERFIELD-EVANS:** Yes.

**CHAIR:** We will not revisit too many. Thank you for your evidence this morning. If we find that the earlier answers to questions on notice did not go that level of detail, we would be grateful if we could get further information. The Committee will you know about any further information it requires.

**Dr STEWART:** After Col Gellatly gave evidence we provided details about staffing levels. We can easily provide that again.

**CHAIR:** We will check that and see what we have.

**The Hon. Dr ARTHUR CHESTERFIELD-EVANS:** If it has been provided previously, you do not need to provide it again.

**CHAIR:** Thank you very much.

**(The witnesses withdrew)**

**JIOJI RAVULO**, Youth Offender Support Programs Team Leader, South-West Youth Services, Mission Australia, 317a Queen Street, Campbelltown,

**ANNETTE LAUREE LAMB**, Service Manager, Mission Australia Employment Services, 317a Queen Street, Campbelltown,

**STEPHEN FOWLER**, Employment Services Manager, New South Wales and the Australian Capital Territory, Mission Australia, 65 Bathurst Street, Sydney, and

**KAREN KEMP**, Operations Manager. Southern New South Wales and the Australian Capital Territory, Mission Australia, 11-17 Swanson Plaza, Belconnen, sworn and examined:

**CHAIR:** Did you receive the Committee's questions earlier this week?

**Ms KEMP:** Yes.

**CHAIR:** As you have probably gathered from what you heard from earlier witnesses from NSW Health, the Committee's questions tend to hop around a bit and sometimes questions are taken on notice. Can you tell us something about the function and role of Mission Employment in the Macquarie Fields area? To whom do you provide services? Can you detail those services in job placement? Particularly, what sort of success have you have? How many people do you deal with and how well do you think you are going?

**Mr FOWLER:** I will kick off, then Annette, our services manager at Campbelltown, will take it from there.

**CHAIR:** Do you wish to make an opening statement?

**Mr FOWLER:** Yes, but first I will bring one matter to the Committee's attention. Please note that our organisation is Mission Australia. Formerly we were badged as Mission Employment and locally known as that in a former contract that we delivered. We now go under the badge and name of Mission Australia.

**CHAIR:** The Committee members will try to remember that. "Mission Employment" was included in some of our questions.

**Mr FOWLER:** It is a common error, but I just wish to draw attention to that. Within our services at Campbelltown, Mission Australia, as I am sure you are aware, is a major charity within the Australian community services network. We deliver primarily two types of service. We have what we call "community services" and we have "employment services". They are two separate and distinct divisions of service delivery within the organisation. My responsibilities are employment services and Annette Lamb and Karen Kemp, who are with me, work also in employment services. Jioji works in community services, a different section. The good thing for us at Campbelltown is that we co-locate all those services at our Campbelltown office. That is why we have brought our specialist managers from the site here today; they can tell you about what they do and how that works.

**Ms LAMB:** Are you asking specifically about services for Macquarie Fields?

**CHAIR:** Yes, although we find that with NSW Health we now have south-west Sydney, but I can talk also about the Macarthur region. We are interested in knowing about your broad services as well as the basic Campbelltown services. Can you give some specifics about Macquarie Fields?

**Ms LAMB:** Yes, I certainly can. Mission Australia is part of the employment services contract, known as ESC3. We have three employment services officers within the Macarthur region; one at Ingleburn, one at Campbelltown and one at Camden—they service the whole Macarthur region. We are contacted by the Department of Education and Workplace Relations [DEWR] to provide those services. Our Ingleburn site would service the majority of job seekers from the Macquarie Fields region as it is one of the closest geographically to Macquarie Fields as a suburb. Specifically, as at yesterday's figures, we are currently servicing 265 individuals from the Macquarie Fields postcode at

our Ingleburn site. Ingleburn is a four-star rating site, the highest in the Macarthur employment services area. Our contract period is from June 2003 to June 2006. Our Ingleburn office has placed 882 job seekers into employment.

**CHAIR:** You say you currently have 265, at what stage are they?

**Ms LAMB:** Varying stages, through what we call the active participation model. They could be unemployed for as little as three months or they could be long-term unemployed. The 265 that I specifically looked at were intensive support customers who require our services on an ongoing basis.

**Ms KEMP:** The people who are based from 12 months-plus to very long-term unemployment.

**CHAIR:** What age group do you deal with mostly?

**Ms LAMB:** It varies. We could have anyone from 16 to 65 or 66.

**CHAIR:** An even mix of men and women? We are trying to understand what sort of groups dominate, and what sort of groups have the highest need for your services.

**Ms LAMB:** I think that for employment services all groups have equal needs. We are trying to find everybody a position I guess, and their position is an individually tailored thing. So their needs are on an individual basis, and that is the method by which we assess every client that comes through.

**Ms KEMP:** Certainly in different demographics you will have a higher caseload of mature clients—and they may be male—who are retrenched or out of work, and have been for some time. Certainly in the Campbelltown area we have a youth contract, and that youth contract is 16 to 19. That youth contract services the whole Macarthur employment services area. We tend to find that in that particular contract we have generally more males.

**Ms LAMB:** Generally more males. They do not just draw on Macquarie Fields clients. These are the specific Macquarie Fields clients that are part of our caseload. The Ingleburn caseload is about 800 odd, and that varies depending on the referral process that comes through from Centrelink. With a youth contract, which is based at Campbelltown, that is specifically for 16 to 19-year-olds.

**CHAIR:** They would not be included in that figure?

**Ms LAMB:** They are.

**CHAIR:** Even though they are not directly serviced from Ingleburn, the 265 you referred to includes that youth contract as well?

**Ms LAMB:** No. The 265 is specific to Ingleburn; that youth contract is some 500 odd clients under a separate contract that we run as well.

**Ms KEMP:** Whilst that services Macarthur, we can have people referred from Cessnock, in the Hunter, down to Wollongong. It is a specialist contract sat in that area to service a pool.

**The Hon. KAYEE GRIFFIN:** This question may need to be taken on notice, given that you are talking about the specific number from Macquarie Fields. The Committee would appreciate a breakdown regarding the 16 to 19-year-olds, and perhaps other age groups, and also whether they are male or female. One of the issues that has been mentioned in this inquiry is the concern about young people getting employment. Several comments have been made about the fact that if you have a Macquarie Fields address or postcode there is a problem in terms of employers and interviews, or simply gaining an interview. It has been said that young people in particular will have problems gaining interviews and getting to, say, the second level after putting in a job application. Perhaps we could have a breakdown of that. You may also like to comment on whether people who come to Mission Australia make such a comment about Macquarie Fields, in particular.

**Ms LAMB:** I have been involved in employment services in the Macarthur region for 13 years now, not only with Mission Australia but also through commercial employment sectors, and I am also a resident of the Macarthur area. The stigma that exists about Macquarie Fields. I do not think the disturbances at Macquarie Fields specifically created that stigma has been there for some time. As part of our service, we advocate for our clients in the employment sector. If we are presenting clients for positions, we advocate on their behalf. If you have young people coming with those views, I guess it is our job to advocate for them to those employers and secure the interviews, positions and so on for them.

I think Macarthur is probably unique in the Sydney metropolitan area, in that we have such close quarters of public housing sectors. Many of our employers are also locals. I guess it is like anything: If somebody has one experience of a particular group, they can carry that through. If somebody had a bad employee from Macquarie Fields in the past, they think that everybody is like that. I think that is something that everybody would experience at some stage, but part of Mission Australia's role is to work with employers, work with our clients, and secure them on their merits.

**Mr FOWLER:** We could certainly give you a snapshot of the profile of our clients there, which is basically at a point in time. We would be happy to provide that.

**The Hon. IAN WEST:** Obviously you would have a number of performance indicators. Given the stresses and strains of ongoing funding applications you would have to make, I am sure you would have a ready reckoner or index of case studies, outcomes and performance indicators, which you may be able to share with the Committee.

**Ms KEMP:** We do have performance indicators. When Annette said we advocate for our clients, whether they be youth, middle-aged or mature, we have programs in place where we try to gain work trials for them. Especially for the age bracket 16 to 19, we also offer our post-placement support. We can actually go in with them and teach them the roles of that particular position.

**The Hon. IAN WEST:** Do you have performance indicators you can give us today, for example, in relation to the 265 people you have at Ingleburn?

**Mr FOWLER:** We can definitely give one indicator now. Annette referred to it earlier but it may have been missed. All participants in the job network are independently rated by the Department of Employment and Workplace Relations [DEWR], with whom we have the contract, about our performance. That is what they call the star ratings. These are independently released and all job network members are assessed against them. The star ratings are just like the ratings for hospitality establishments and that sort of thing. It goes from one to five, five being the absolute best star rating and one being a much lower star rating.

Our service at Ingleburn has been a very successful service, and it has a four-star rating. So that gives an indication of the fact that they are fulfilling the contract quite well. We have had some challenges with our star ratings—

**The Hon. IAN WEST:** It does not mean anything to me; it must mean something to someone. It would be nice to get an explanation as to what four stars means.

**Ms KEMP:** It means that we are sustaining employment—

**The Hon. IAN WEST:** I do not mean a verbal explanation; it would be good to have some material on it. I am mindful of the way they rate motels. With regard to the 265 at Ingleburn, how many have you placed?

**Ms LAMB:** We have placed 882 over the course of the contract. Currently there are 265 on the caseload to be placed.

**The Hon. IAN WEST:** Over the term of the contract you have placed 882, but how many have you had on your books?

**Ms LAMB:** I would have to have a look—

**The Hon. IAN WEST:** A lot more than 265, obviously?

**Ms LAMB:** That is right. To give you an indication, of the 265 on the current caseload, the whole caseload would be around the 800 mark—

**CHAIR:** For the Ingleburn office?

**Ms LAMB:** That is right. 265 is the Macquarie Fields component.

**CHAIR:** That is how many you have on your books at the moment. What kind of success have you had over the contract since 2003? I suppose it depends how you measure success.

**Ms KEMP:** We could provide that in detail. The way the star ratings work is very heavily explained on the DEWR web site, because they are the ones who independently put these star ratings out. It is an average performance of all job network members over the whole of Australia on their relative performance of getting long-term unemployed people off benefits for a period of 13 weeks. So the higher the rating, the higher your relative performance against everybody else in doing that.

**The Hon. IAN WEST:** So if I place 10 out of 100 that is five-star rating?

**Mr FOWLER:** No. It is the way the star ratings are determined. If you place five out of 100 but all your competitors have placed only four, you will get a five-star rating.

**The Hon. Dr ARTHUR CHESTERFIELD-EVANS:** So if everyone is doing badly you get a high star rating?

**Mr FOWLER:** It is a relative performance, yes.

**The Hon. Dr ARTHUR CHESTERFIELD-EVANS:** So everyone might get a five-star rating but that might be because all of them are doing badly? I can see that is a good incentive for someone who is doing well.

**Mr FOWLER:** The star ratings are averaged over the whole of Australia, not just within the one ESA. So the average is taken on Australia's performance, not just on the performance of one site. The DEWR tells us that if you are a five-star provider in Ingleburn you are equivalent to a five-star provider anywhere in Australia.

**The Hon. IAN WEST:** But you might be placing three out of 100 and other places in Australia might be placing 50 out of 100?

**Mr FOWLER:** Yes. If that were the case it would be very unlikely that you would receive a high star rating.

**The Hon. Dr ARTHUR CHESTERFIELD-EVANS:** Is it compared to other employment agencies in your area?

**Mr FOWLER:** No.

**CHAIR:** We could spend hours trying to get this straight when all we probably need to do is go to the web site. I think we should look much more specifically at our questions. For instance, question No. 3 refers to education and employment and talks about the main obstacles being faced by people that you assist. Mr Ravulo, you might want to make some comments because you know about people from a community services perspective. We are trying to find out what sorts of problems exist, how they are addressed and how we can address them better, specifically in relation to Macquarie Fields or, more broadly, in relation to Macarthur.

**Mr RAVULO:** With our community services that cover the Campbelltown local government area we come under three sections. We have case management services, counselling services and educational programs that reach out to the Macquarie Fields region or to the area itself. A couple of

those case-managed services are run in conjunction with the juvenile justice system that we have funded to work directly with young offenders who are released from custody and who need direct assistance on release. We run those models in the area. A lot of young people from Macquarie Fields that were involved in the disturbance are part of our case management services. We want to ensure we are responsive to those individual needs.

Over the past 1½ years we have developed services that have catered specifically for the needs of the young people in Macquarie Fields involved in those disturbances. I will quickly talk about one before referring to some of the other obstacles. We developed a reading and writing program in conjunction with TAFE Outreach at Macquarie Fields TAFE. We instigated a program that would work in with young people who chronologically are 15 to 18 but academically are K-2. We had to undertake an intake procedure. We instigated that at our end with TAFE in regard to developing suitable material that would assist those young people with their educational needs.

I was involved in teaching the course as my background is also in education. I recently finished my masters in that. I was involved in developing specific numeracy and literacy tasks that would cater specifically for young people. For example, when I first went to teach the young people—again they were all screened before coming to the class for their motivational level—I attempted to do some basic alphabet and vocabulary work. When I started the work they did not know there were 26 letters in the alphabet or that the letters even existed. I am talking about 15-year-olds to 17-year-olds. When I did maths in the afternoon and I went to do multiple digit additions, like five plus 12, they did not even know what five plus seven was, so I had to teach them the finger-counting method.

That is indicative of some of the educational areas that are needing some form of improvement; not necessarily the young people in regard to educational resources but the engagement process these young people are experiencing. So I suppose it is a matter of being able to develop specific strategies that will provide these young people with an opportunity to engage more effectively in infants, primary and high school. A lot of time the young offenders that we are working with are going up to year 8 but, in effect, their academic level is low infants.

**CHAIR:** Are they lifelong truants? Can you summarise how they got to be so illiterate?

**Mr RAVULO:** A lot of the time there are multiple reasons as to why it occurs. A lot of them will be disengaged in the primary school system and they will go to the special behavioural schools across the Macarthur region. Then they will be expelled—which is quite an achievement for behavioural schools—from those educational institutions. A lot of that has to do with the young person not engaging with work in the classroom because of significant behavioural problems that are not necessarily reinforced within the family system and the dynamics that are there.

It also comes back down to the family's ability to reiterate that education is a key aspect to lifelong learning, resiliency and all those other social capacity areas that need to be instigated by the family and the education system that we are working with in the region. I believe that those are just some of the reasons that contribute to the low levels of education, even to the pretension of the education they are having.

**CHAIR:** Can you give us any sort of quantitative picture? How many people are we talking about? You are probably dealing with a relatively small number, but that may be only the tip of the iceberg.

**Mr RAVULO:** In regard to the young people we have in our developing reading and writing course, we are working with those who are involved in offending behaviour. Currently on our books we have 10 young people who are enrolled in our course. They will come along and participate in those activities. The course started in February, a month before the Macquarie Fields riots occurred. We instigated this program and it still continues today.

In the life of the program we have had near to 15 young people participate, with five to six completing the program or coming back. We have undertaken some more modules to cater for some of their other educational needs. We also want to ensure that we are catering for their vocational needs. We want to provide opportunities for young people to learn basic numeracy and literacy and



contextualise that into areas that will provide them with employment. I am talking about young people aged 15, 16 and 17.

**CHAIR:** With what potential employer would you get a job for the people that you are describing?

**Ms LAMB:** One of the goals of Mission Australia Employment is to build strong relationships with employers in the Macarthur region. That is certainly where we have been going in the Ingleburn office. So I guess it is advocating for clients as well as maybe educating them—I do not think educating is the right word; counselling is probably the right word for some of the local business owners—about where clients of this nature can be employed. If somebody cannot read or write it does not mean they are not worthwhile in an employment situation. We identify the employment opportunities in our region and put round pegs in round holes. We identify opportunities for these young people and advocate in the marketplace to find suitable employment for them.

**The Hon. ROBYN PARKER** I am horrified and fascinated at the same time. I am horrified at the statistics and the level of literacy, but encouraged by the program that you are running. Referring to these young people's behaviour, what comes first? Is it poor literacy and numeracy levels leading to poor behaviour, is it the other way round, or is it a combination of both?

**Mr RAVULO:** I think it can be a combination of both. Surprisingly, in running the course as the classroom teacher myself, again the context of these young people and their behaviour were they were expelled from behavioural schools, special education schools, that sort of staff, but through the process of them being involved in developing the reading and writing course I have not once has any behavioural issues that any of those young people in the classroom, not once. I believe that was the process of them being engaged effectively by the teacher and the class work that they were undertaking to improve their numeracy and literacy. So I think that was a key process.

It is a matter of also acknowledging that you have got to put in support systems that will cater for specific behaviours. So we also work with having one student with a support worker that might be another youth worker from the region or volunteer that has come in and spent some time training with us into working effectively with young offenders. So it was about being able to create those support systems within the classroom that will cater for the behaviour. But, again, the work is dealing specifically. So it is student-centred curriculum sort of stuff that we are very focused on undertaking to maintain a plausible level of behaviour.

**The Hon. ROBYN PARKER:** What is the ratio of teacher to student?

**Mr RAVULO:** It depends. When we have got about six young people in the classroom at any one given time we might have three support workers plus the classroom teacher.

**The Hon. ROBYN PARKER:** So it is a high-level intervention program in terms of intensive staffing?

**Mr RAVULO:** Definitely. And it is only through our partnerships with other community support agencies that we are able to have the support workers in the classroom. Otherwise we would not have them there.

**The Hon. ROBYN PARKER:** How do these young people get through to year 8 with that level of literacy and numeracy?

**Mr RAVULO:** From my understanding, and a lot of the time I have done a lot of reading into the engagement process in schools across south-west Sydney through my Masters, I think a lot of the time it is the classroom teacher's ability to not necessarily cater for those individuals. So they just end up being left behind to a certain degree. The classroom teacher has, I suppose, such a diverse or complex role in being able to cater for 30 students in the one classroom, let alone the one or two that are falling behind, and I think our education system revolves around the notion of individual learning where we only really cater for those who are going to succeed in the classroom and if those that are not actually meeting those particular standards are left behind, that is really therefore because they did not put in the effort. It is that whole thing of positive reinforcement through individual learning.

So that is what I believe is one of the causations to a lot of the young people not being catered for within the classroom system, which then, of course, result in a lot of that negative behaviour.

**The Hon. ROBYN PARKER:** You say you have screened these young people, so therefore there is obviously now a level of motivation that they identified that that is one of the things that is holding them back.

**Mr RAVULO:** Definitely.

**The Hon. ROBYN PARKER:** When do they change from that point of mucking up, if you like, in the classroom and being expelled to being motivated enough to doing something about that for themselves?

**Mr RAVULO:** I think it is mixed with their ability to realise that a lot of the time, especially with Macquarie Fields young people, they are stigmatised, they are labelled, and they realise a lot of the time that they are no hopers—they hear it from their parents as well—and a lot of the time they want to do something with themselves to provide them with opportunities to move forward. I really believe that. I really believe that is in the time that we have worked with these young people it is about them understanding or knowing that these options might exist for them to undertake. And a lot of the time that is what it is to actually enable that motivation to occur, that they know that there is a course available that caters individually for their educational needs and other social aspects as well that we incorporate as part of our course.

**CHAIR:** Who funds this course?

**Mr RAVULO:** It is in partnership with TAFE Outreach under the Equity Unit. But all the resources, all the material, all the classroom work, is actually resourced by Mission Australia; we actually have that as part of our post release program which is then funded by Juvenile Justice. But we are currently putting in other submissions to other departments and other funding schemes to provide money that will be consistent for us to purchase these resources because, again, our budget is limited in being able to do so.

**The Hon. Dr ARTHUR CHESTERFIELD-EVANS:** You said you are funded by Juvenile Justice's post-release program. Does that mean the only people who are eligible of post-release people?

**Mr RAVULO:** Pretty much. The program that will run with developing reading and writing is just for Juvenile Justice clients or young offenders.

**The Hon. Dr ARTHUR CHESTERFIELD-EVANS:** And how young are they? You said 15 to 18 did you not?

**Mr RAVULO:** The ones that we work in with our post-release program is 10 to 18, but we are screening the young people to be probably 14 and up. The youngest that we have had in draw is 13. Officially we are not really meant to have a 13-year-old involved in the TAFE courses, but then that is also indicative that a lot of the time the regional schools are not able to cater for the younger ones as well.

**The Hon. Dr ARTHUR CHESTERFIELD-EVANS:** So you are catching them a bit old basically, and you are not able to catch them younger, is that the problem?

**Mr RAVULO:** That is the thing, yes, because by law within the TAFE system they have to be 14 and nine months and/or 15 to officially enrol because it is a vocational institution. So it is a matter of acknowledging that. It bases its ability to be a pseudo school institute as well, but ultimately it is a vocational learning area that enables us to take on those who are 15 and up.

**The Hon. Dr ARTHUR CHESTERFIELD-EVANS:** Bill Crewes I think is funding his own thing for younger kids. Do you have a deficiency in that area, would you say?

**Mr RAVULO:** Definitely, because, again, it is a matter of acknowledging that there have been times where we have worked with 12 and 13 year olds who are not being significantly picked up by the education system, and that is also because of their truancy, but when you go to actually place them in even special ed schools, there are limited places available for them to be there, so they are sitting around for quite a while before we can actually pick them up.

**The Hon. Dr ARTHUR CHESTERFIELD-EVANS:** So there are not even special ed places?

**Mr RAVULO:** Yes, I think that is something that needs to be addressed, but more so around the school's capacity to actually take on those particularly young people as well, because, again, it is a stigma and label that occurs.

**The Hon. IAN WEST:** Just one point of clarification on that important aspect of self motivation. Am I right in assuming that it would be difficult to pick up the younger ones because it would not be until they are 15 or 16 and have been through the system before the self motivation kicks in?

**Mr RAVULO:** There are a few things definitely with that. Because they are starting to realise that they are of an age when they can actually obtain some form of employment. So there is the motivation to improve their skills to enable them to do that. But also we have the older group—15, 16, 17—because if we had the 12 and 13-year-olds mix—it is already demeaning enough that they are 15, 16, 17 and they do not know the alphabet, to then have 12-year-olds say, "You're 15, 16, 17 and you don't know the alphabet". So we have also got to make sure that we are creating an environment for the older adolescents to feel they can actually learned without being discriminated against because of age.

**The Hon. KAYEE GRIFFIN:** Just two points. Apart from the involvement of TAFE you said that there are other community services and agencies that are involved. Could you give us an idea of the other ones that are involved in your program?

**Mr RAVULO:** The main one that we work with is Campbelltown Youth Services, and they have for youth centres that run throughout the Campbelltown region. One of them is actually in Macquarie Fields, and we work with the senior youth workers and sometimes with the assistant youth workers that might make themselves available to come and actually be support workers. The great thing about it is also the fact that a lot of the time when working with young offenders, it is very, very difficult to refer them on to youth agencies in the area because of significant trust issues. So it is very difficult that we say, "Yes, we will refer you to a youth centre because that is where you can receive some support". A lot of the time that is not happening because the young person has not made a connection with the staff in that centre.

So the brilliant thing about those youth workers coming in as support workers into our draw program under our model of support is to then have them build rapport directly with those young offenders, which then in the long run will enable those young offenders to know someone within those youth centres that we are working in partnership with.

**The Hon. KAYEE GRIFFIN:** this question is probably directed to Ms Lamb. In relation to the 16 to 19-year-olds who come in for your services for job seeking and so on, the ones who do have literacy and numeracy problems, do you refer them elsewhere in relation to trying to get assistance in doing that?

**Ms LAMB:** Yes, certainly. Going back to what Georgie was saying about motivation, I think it is important to let it be known that once we have the ability to engage with these young people, so once we have got them in our office, once we have built those relationships, we have got that trust; once we have the ability to engage with these young people, we are a lot further down the track to moving them through into employment. So part of that engagement process is, I guess, letting them know what the service is, what we have available, what jobs are available. The worst thing I think we can do on that engagement level is to bring these young people in and then not have positions to offer them down the track.

Part of the Mission Australia strategy is to ensure that we have an adequate number of vacancies posted on our bulletin boards and our Internet sites so that when we engage with these young people in the very first phone call or the very first letter we can let them know that there are apprenticeships or hospitality opportunities for them—a range of different vacancies. We do not want to discourage them from that engagement process. We do not want them to come in and we do not have anything for them today or this week.

Getting back to Kayee's point, the assessment process is so crucial the very first time that we sit down and meet with them. That is when we need to find out what they can do, what their barriers are, what we need to do for them to overcome those barriers and what opportunities we have today that could adequately take that person in the direction of being employed. Obviously if young people have literacy issues we refer them on to literacy programs. Some of them have other issues that are barriers to employment. These are numerous. It may just be that—

**CHAIR:** Health issues? Mental illness issues? Drug and alcohol issues?

**Ms LAMB:** Oftentimes. It could be family issues. They may be responsible for the care of young siblings. So if they sustain employment who will look after their young siblings? That is not always the case but that is one of the barriers that is posed. Oftentimes they do not have a drivers licence because they have racked up fines for jumping trains and so on. The transport situation, particularly in Macquarie Fields and Macarthur, has been brought to the table on numerous occasions. While there is access to public transport sometimes it does not cover the shifts they need to work. Young people especially can sometimes perceive trains as being dangerous. The transport issue can at times really limit and pose barriers.

That is one of our challenges as well. We have had instances where young people have been assaulted on trains in the past and will not catch trains again. Then it becomes part of our role either to get them through that barrier through counselling or to address the problem by finding them a job that they do not need to catch a train to get to. That is why I keep coming back to the relationships with our employers. We need to have that understanding and trust with our employers. We also need to build a relationship with the young people who speak to us. It is a definite trust issue there as well. They need to know that they can tell us anything and that we are there to assist them. Oftentimes they may know that they have these barriers but do not know how to address them adequately themselves.

**The Hon. Dr ARTHUR CHESTERFIELD-EVANS:** On that point, we met with some of the kids who were involved in the rioting—

**CHAIR:** Arthur, I ask you to remember that that was a confidential hearing so be careful about what you mention.

**The Hon. Dr ARTHUR CHESTERFIELD-EVANS:** Yes. Some of them did not give themselves much chance of ever getting a drivers licence because they were not literate and the RTA does not seem to have any way of dealing with illiterate kids. They basically said, "When we get caught enough, we'll end up in gaol because we'll never get a licence". They were almost fatalistic. Do you have a point of intervention in that process? Does the RTA ever tell you that it is a problem? Do you have a link with the police? Can you get to these kids in another way? If they do not front up at your door or identify themselves what happens?

**Ms LAMB:** If we have clients on our caseload whom we identify as having literacy issues and they have the ability to go down and get a licence we oftentimes go down to the RTA with them and they will do a verbal test with them over the counter.

**The Hon. Dr ARTHUR CHESTERFIELD-EVANS:** The problem is they cannot learn the rules because they cannot read the book.

**Ms KEMP:** We can do prior training with them and support them and physically have them go through training to get a licence. We try to intervene by up-skilling them to get a licence.

**The Hon. Dr ARTHUR CHESTERFIELD-EVANS:** Does the problem of the non-payment of fines stop a lot of young people getting licences?

**Ms LAMB:** Absolutely—and it is not just young people.

**The Hon. Dr ARTHUR CHESTERFIELD-EVANS:** So the revenue collection method whereby if you have one fine you cannot get your licence effectively de-licenses a large number of people.

**Ms LAMB:** That is right.

**The Hon. Dr ARTHUR CHESTERFIELD-EVANS:** Does that mean that they go on to get criminal records and spiral downhill?

**Ms LAMB:** I do not think that happens in every case.

**The Hon. Dr ARTHUR CHESTERFIELD-EVANS:** No.

**Ms LAMB:** But it may certainly spiral them down to not having the best employment opportunities they could secure.

**The Hon. Dr ARTHUR CHESTERFIELD-EVANS:** So the money saved in fines by using this method has a very big downside in terms of their job opportunities and life plan. Do you think that is true?

**Ms KEMP:** It certainly limits their ability to go for a broader range of positions.

**CHAIR:** I think Jioji wants to make a comment.

**Mr RAVULO:** It further marginalises young offenders. A lot of the time they receive fines that are not dealt with and continue to accumulate. We then call the State Debt Recovery Office [SDRO] to make an application to freeze those fines accordingly. If we do not do that it becomes a criminal matter and they go to court, and that is another legal matter that the young person has to deal with. I believe that system creates more barriers for a lot of our young offenders to being able to obtain a licence. That is the other issue: Because they see no hope of getting a licence they then get caught for unlicensed driving. So there are more and more offences.

**The Hon. Dr ARTHUR CHESTERFIELD-EVANS:** If you do not pick that up, who would? The police say, "Have you or have you not got a licence?" They do not say, "Hey, I can send you to the State Debt Recovery Office and send you off for literacy training with the wonderful people at Mission Australia and get the ball rolling". They do not change that path.

**Mr RAVULO:** No, not at all. That is why it is important for us to take the initiative and approach the SDRO with that application on behalf of the young person to freeze those fines as soon as we can. Ultimately, if we freeze the fines and make an arrangement for them to start making payments from their Centrelink benefits, if they make at least six consecutive payments with the SDRO the RTA ban is lifted or reconsidered. That is the goal that we work towards.

**CHAIR:** I am very conscious that we are already over time. We have worked out a couple of questions that we can ask you to take on notice. The two areas that we really want to talk to you about today relate to the continual criticism of a lack of co-ordination in the Macarthur area generally, and particularly in Macquarie Fields. Comments have been made both about co-ordination between government agencies and—perhaps more importantly in your case—co-ordination between government agencies and organisations such as Mission Australia and other non-government organisations. We also want to talk to you about young people's relationship with the police. We have some questions that relate to the disturbances. We need to get onto those two areas. Tell us about the co-ordination issue. Is that a problem?

**Ms LAMB:** Do you want to keep this specific to employment?

**CHAIR:** Employment and more broadly because clearly Jioji, in particular, wears the community services hat. You obviously also have a perspective on the issue as a local resident and long-term worker in the area.

**Ms LAMB:** From the Mission Australia perspective, we are blessed with having Community Services next door, and they are often called upon. From an employment perspective, I guess our largest interaction would have to be with local employers because obviously that is where we will be sourcing our vacancies. We do not just look at local employers; we obviously broaden the spectrum somewhat. We have strong relationships with the Macarthur Chamber of Commerce. There was a network that came about after the Macquarie Fields disturbances that is called Partners in Employment. Essentially, that is a networking group that brings together all the employment agencies and any organisation in the Macarthur region that has a finger in the pie when it comes to employment issues. They have been invited to become a network member of Partners in Employment.

**CHAIR:** Who initiated that?

**Ms LAMB:** I think it came from Campbelltown council. The person who sends out all the information was in Campbelltown council but it was in negotiation with all of the interested parties in Macarthur. From a job network perspective, obviously it is a competitive environment; we are judged by our performance. Each individual organisation would have their individual strategies pertaining back to the caseloads and how they are going to get the best outcomes for those caseloads, but we also have to bear in mind our clients. When we are assessing someone on such an individual basis, that leads us into linkages with people like the Department of Community Services, the Department of Housing, Centrelink definitely—we have very strong linkages within Centrelink—and Juvenile Justice.

**Mr RAVULO:** I will talk about our active partnerships. We have active partnerships with Juvenile Justice by being funded with two of their community-funded programs, which is the post-release and also the Juvenile Justice employment skilling program, which again are two models established by the Department of Juvenile Justice. We actually auspiced that for our region under Mission Australia, so that is an active partnership. We have just recently started a partnership with Centrelink, the local customer service centre where we are able to go in and speak directly with the staff on our client's behalf, with the client's permission, to access their files and talk about where they are at, and monitor where they are at with their Centrelink records, which is great.

We work, of course, with Probation and Parole with some of the older ones who might be going over from Juvenile Justice into the adult system. We have an active partnership with TAFE with the reading and writing course and also we have other courses that are run specifically for young offenders that we have just recently started to work with them upon. We actually inform TAFE Outreach how to actually shape their courses from scratch, so that is a great opportunity that we have. We also have a direct partnership with NSW Police with a newly funded program from the Premier's Department, which is under the New South Wales Partnership with Pacific Communities where we work with police local area commands, which refers to us Pacific islanders who are young offenders. That is one of the other case management services that I look after. We have an active partnership with police in regards to that particular program.

**Ms LAMB:** We also look into Probation and Parole so we may have people who have been released. They may be on weekend detention. If we find them a position where they may need to work on a Saturday, we will link in with Probation and Parole, let them know the details of the employment and what is occurring so that they will not lose their jobs and we can interact to make it sustainable for them.

**CHAIR:** The Committee is interested in whether the linkages take a lot of effort to put in place and keep in place?

**Ms LAMB:** Anything worthwhile takes a lot of effort.

**CHAIR:** Yes, we know that, but we are looking at how best to provide services, State Government, Federal Government, local government and non-government organisation [NGO] services in a particular area, how do you make it happen easiest and best. You mentioned a lot of

agencies. Do you spend half your time trying to keep those linkages going so that you can provide the job or are you getting it right and it is happening reasonably well?

**Ms LAMB:** From the employment perspective, that is where Partners in Employment makes it really easy. We catch up every two months and if there are any issues to be discussed or put on the agenda, we flick those through for discussion on the table at the time that we meet. Also, Mission Australia has a passionate group of staff. It comes back to our passion and dedication to make these linkages occur. When you have someone sitting in front of you who may be on weekend detention and you have a job for them and that job may be in jeopardy, so we are not going to sit back and let that happen. We want their lives to move forward. It comes back to our dedication and our passion.

**Mr RAVULO:** And the ability to build effective rapport and engagement with those respective workers that represent those departments or NGOs, that is something that you just cannot tick a box. That type of relationship is not really tangible. It needs to be maintained with those organisations to make sure that we have those active partnerships.

**Mr FOWLER:** It really comes back to the relationships that the individual staff have. We are regularly setting up opportunities for those relations to occur. It does eat into our time and costs, but it is an investment that we regularly make, whether it is a breakfast, attending meetings, release to go to into agencies or whatever, and that would be a management decision right across-the-board that we would be strongly pushing because they are so important. The other thing that we are regularly doing is updating our directories. That is a constant one. Staff sitting there in front of the client actually have names, phone numbers and contact details of people to get in touch with because it all comes down to, "How am I going to help Fred" who is in front of me or whatever it may be to do that. You got to have that information. It is the challenge.

**The Hon. IAN WEST:** How do you factor that into funding when you apply for it? You cannot factor that into it, can you?

**Mr FOWLER:** It is a very difficult one but we absorb that as part of the natural cost.

**CHAIR:** What comments would you make about the relationship between people in Macquarie Fields specifically with the police, particularly the relationship of young people with the police? Did the disturbances reflect all sorts of difficulties there? Have things got worse or better because people have taken notice? How would you sum up the last year or so in Macquarie Fields?

**Ms LAMB:** From an employment perspective, and when I say we outreached a number of employers who are not in the Macarthur region, that includes people who may not have necessarily known where Macquarie Fields was until they saw it on the news, as the publicity that followed on from those disturbances spilled out into a lot of different areas. It probably highlighted the residents' own stigma about where they lived. For those who probably were not feeling inadequate or did not have a lack of skills—as you mentioned before, people were reluctant to disclose where they lived on job applications—so I think from an employment perspective the publicity surrounding those disturbances probably highlighted it in a very negative way, which is always challenging and is something that we need to overcome.

As far as relationships with the police, I think any child in trouble never has a good relationship. If you are in trouble, you are not going to like them too much. We hear about that through our individual case management. There are a lot of young people in Macquarie Fields who do not have issues with the police; they have not been in trouble and we are working with them as well. It would be irresponsible of us to collectively call Macquarie Fields young people bad, troublesome, in trouble with the police, and all involved in the riots. A number of people in our caseloads may have been in Macquarie Fields at the time of the riots and their comments to me were, "We got out of there. It's not where we wanted to be." I think we are specifically talking about a very small percentage of the young people and the residents of the area.

**Mr RAVULO:** On the flip side, our young people were the ones who said, "The disturbance is happening. Let's jump on." We are finding that a lot of the time they are only rebelling against the constant profiling and the strategic community policing that is in place in regards to tracking known young offenders. That creates issues of labelling with young people and their understanding of self-

identity. At the moment I am undertaking my doctorate and I am studying the effect of that with young offenders in regards to that contributing to identity in the adolescent stage of development and what that means for their ability to move beyond that particular label.

A lot of the time they are internalising the fact that if they are followed by the police, they are bad; "so that means that I must be bad", so they live up to that expectation. That is a key aspect to the research that I am doing at the moment with the doctorate. One of the other interesting things, though, with it being a year on is the fact that some of those young offenders are proud that they are from Macquarie Fields; they were part of that activity. But that is only indicative of the fact that they have nothing else really to be proud of, to a certain degree. "I have been told that I am a loser, but, hey, I'm from Macquarie Fields and I'm involved in this". Again that is with all the public notoriety that happened within the area. So it is a mix. Again you cannot just generalise with all young people, but with the young offenders with whom we are working that is the case a lot of the time with what is happening.

**CHAIR:** What is the role of the media in the pattern you have just talked about? Are you critical of the role of the media?

**Mr RAVULO:** Yes. One of the things that I noticed during that time of disturbance was the fact that the media was coming in, sensationalising a lot of the stuff that was happening in the community, in essence making it harder for us to feel like we were doing any valid work in the community because a lot of the time they were going in saying "Why is this going on? Why aren't the services there?" But we were there. I know I was definitely at the forefront of even working with the victims of the families themselves and doing counselling with them. But it was the point that the media came in, decided to sensationalise all the things that were happening there and then came away without providing any real resolution for what happened during those disturbances.

**Ms LAMB:** Probably not specific to the media at that time, I do not know if it was a slow news leak or what was happening, but if you look at the Macarthur and Liverpool local papers they have a Police Beat section, I think it is called, and whenever it describes crimes and people involved in them it is always an Airs man or a Macquarie Fields woman. So in reading that it is often directly related back to the post codes of the Department of Housing estate. Whilst the media exploded on the Macquarie Fields riots at the time that they occurred, it is also an ongoing issue where it constantly labels crimes. I do not know whether it is people just picking up from looking at the court lists but you certainly do not see "Denham Court man done for DUI". It is always "Macquarie Fields drug dealer" "Such and such assaults" that are coming through on a weekly basis.

It is the media's job to report the news, but I think when we are talking about stigma, low self-esteem and the issues involved in those Department of Housing estate areas, in particular, it is highlighted weekly. It is not just something that happened last February.

**The Hon. ROBYN PARKER:** It seems to me it would be good for the media to spend a day with you to see some of the fantastic things that you are doing each week.

**Mr RAVULO:** Please.

**The Hon. ROBYN PARKER:** It would also be good for the Committee to do the same thing. Is there a flipside positive benefit in relation to media involvement? Would the Committee be here with the same level of interest from the media if there had not been some sort of reporting in relation to Macquarie Fields and Redfern?

**Mr RAVULO:** Funding is the key area that is always discussed when it comes to this sort of thing, and hopefully funding will be made available, though I must say in the context of developing suitable programs for the region as well. I know during the time of media hype a Minister mentioned that "Look at Macquarie Fields on a map and you will be able to see that there is a sports field here, and a swimming pool here"—

**Ms LAMB:** And a beach—

**Mr RAVULO:** "and a gym here", but are those centres funded to provide programs that will engage the young people into them? Sure, the media will provide the opportunity for this inquiry to



occur to look at what funding outcomes need to be instituted but ultimately it should provide the context for programs to have an effective appeal to the community rather than just say "Here's some funding" and throw it out there because that might solve the problem. I think work still needs to go into developing those tangible programs to exist.

**Ms LAMB:** That is right. From an employment perspective if we are talking about the different programs, lack of communication or cohesion, one of the big things that is occurring in Macarthur at the moment is employer groups are actually identifying skills shortages and working with TAFE and universities. There is a new development in the Ingleburn region which is right near Macquarie Fields, called Austool. They are training people into toolmaking and then taking those trainees directly into the local toolmaking businesses through the University of Western Sydney. There are definitely programs in place to identify skills shortages and provide opportunities. Those positions are not just for young people but for anybody interested in that as a career option.

Yes, the media has highlighted a lot of negativity but it does not like to report the good news either. So there are also a lot of people out there and a lot of really good things happening in the Macarthur region that are targeted not only at Macquarie Fields residents but Macarthur residents as a whole. Skills shortages is obviously prominent and something that, as an employment service provider to the region, we are well on top of. So we are constantly liaising on those levels within organisations so as to identify skills shortages and where can we perhaps plug those holes?

When we are taking people with little or no experience or little or no career guidance we can actually guide them into a direction that is going to provide a sustainable tangible outcome for them. We do not want to fill the market up with a certain skill level with something these kids might think is a lot of fun but we want to give them other options as fun jobs where the skills shortages are currently so that they will be employed quicker and for longer periods.

**Mr RAVULO:** I will give examples of programs that might be suitable. They are developmental programs where they are able to develop communication, inter-personal and social living skills as well, that is, key areas, and parenting skills. I believe it is those sorts of things that need to be developed in tangible programs where workers might be employed at the community level to then go into the homes and work more effectively with the families.

**CHAIR:** I apologise for keeping you for such a long time but we found what you had to say interesting and useful for our inquiry. Thank you for the effort and commitment for helping the Committee with the inquiry. Mr Fowler do you have anything to say?

**Mr FOWLER:** Yes. I thank the Committee for this opportunity. I remind the Committee that the issues out there are very complex and there is an awful lot of need. Our organisation is out there and, as you can hear from some of the examples here, our staff are very committed to this area and to working with their clients. They are passionate about what they do, and they are doing a really good job. We are really pleased to be able to say we have got some successes, but those successes come basically one at a time. These clients who engage with us across the desk have so many wonderful great stories and we would like to be able to share them more and more. It is a great part of the world. We are really happy to be there and thank you for this opportunity.

**(The witnesses withdrew)**

**(Short adjournment)**

**PETER ROBERT PHELPS**, School Education Director, Ingleburn Schools, Department of Education and Training, Bridge Street, Sydney, and

**KIMBLE JOHN FILLINGHAM**, Regional Director, South-western Sydney, Department of Education and Training, 500 Chapel Road, Bankstown, sworn and examined:

**CHAIR:** Do you have a power point presentation for us?

**Mr PHELPS:** Yes, that is correct.

**CHAIR:** Do you want to say anything by way of an opening statement?

**Mr FILLINGHAM:** I might just make a couple of comments to put things in context. I will tell you a little about south-western Sydney region. I have the position of Regional Director there. The region consists of 274 schools. It ranges from Campsie down through to the Southern Highlands to just past Bargo, a place called Yanderra. Macquarie Fields is one of the communities within our region. The region is divided into 10 groups, each looked after by a school education director, and Macquarie Fields schools are part of the Ingleburn schools. Peter Phelps is my director who looks after that group of schools. So Peter has the very detailed knowledge of those groups of schools and will do the bulk of the presentation today. I will deal with some of the issues to do with a couple of the committees that were set up around Macquarie Fields and also a couple of the statewide issues. I will particularly take the part for TAFE New South Wales in the couple of things it is doing in the employability strategy.

**CHAIR:** You will take us through this, will you?

**Mr PHELPS:** Yes. I thought we would start putting things in context.

**Mr PHELPS:** Three schools service the Housing Commission component of Macquarie Fields: Curran Public School, Guise Public School and James Meehan Public School. I will give some information on each of those schools to give a context for education. Curran Public School has 285 students, 14 class teachers, support teachers, learning assistants, an English second language teacher, a reading recovery teacher—I will talk a little later about reading recovery-- a librarian teacher, school counsellor, office personnel, a general assistant and a family worker. Its attendance rates fall a little below what is anticipated for the State, but that can be exacerbated by one or two students who have more irregular attendance than the norm.

Curran Public School's targets for 2006, which will be published this year in their annual school report, are to develop students' ability to write simple, compound and complex sentences; to enhance student competence in recording their understanding of mathematical concepts; to develop strategies to encourage and improve student attendance; to improve students' ability to interact positively with peers and adults; and assessment and reporting.

**CHAIR:** You may not have to read these slides; you could leave a copy of them with the Committee.

**Mr PHELPS:** I will do that.

**CHAIR:** That might save some time, and we ask you questions.

**The Hon. Dr ARTHUR CHESTERFIELD-EVANS:** Just put them on screen, and we can read them.

**Mr PHELPS:** Guise Public School is the same size as Curran. Those two schools feed into James Meehan; all their students would go to James Meehan High School, which currently has 549 students.

**CHAIR:** Do many of the kids from those two primary schools go elsewhere, to more specialist high schools, for instance?

**Mr PHELPS:** Most would go to James Meehan.

**The Hon. Dr ARTHUR CHESTERFIELD-EVANS:** So the district is holding up quite well with the State.

**Mr PHELPS:** Yes.

**The Hon. Dr ARTHUR CHESTERFIELD-EVANS:** The district is the middle bar, is that right?

**Mr PHELPS:** Yes.

**The Hon. Dr ARTHUR CHESTERFIELD-EVANS:** It is up there with the State average.

**Mr PHELPS:** Yes.

**The Hon. Dr ARTHUR CHESTERFIELD-EVANS:** But, then, these schools are not holding up?

**Mr PHELPS:** They are a little bit below the State average, yes.

**The Hon. Dr ARTHUR CHESTERFIELD-EVANS:** So, 5 per cent, as a general rule?

**Mr PHELPS:** Yes.

**CHAIR:** That is in attendance, yes.

**Mr PHELPS:** But it is slightly improving—as you can see from 2001 through to 2004.

**The Hon. Dr ARTHUR CHESTERFIELD-EVANS:** About 1 per cent, is it?

**Mr PHELPS:** It is 1 per cent or 2 per cent. But that can be significant for the kids that are making that improvement.

**The Hon. Dr ARTHUR CHESTERFIELD-EVANS:** Of the kids that are not there, how many of them get picked up? Or do you want to finish your presentation first, and I will ask my questions at the end of that?

**Mr PHELPS:** I think so. I would like to talk about individual programs. James Meehan's targets include improvements in the School Certificate, reducing time and impact of suspensions on student learning, and increasing awareness and participation of parents in schools. The three schools, between them, have a number of very significant programs, which they have virtually worked through with their school communities and developed. There is an array of those programs. I am going to talk through what they are, so that you will understand where there is interagency and what the programs are aiming to do.

These programs are additional to the core programs that the school offers in relation to Board of Studies courses and Department of Education and Training policies and procedures, in the most part. First of all, the two primary schools run breakfast programs. Last year, they were run on Monday, Wednesday and Friday. Curran primary school would have, on average, 25 kids attending for breakfast programs on those days, and Guise Public School would have 60. The schools have reported improved attention in class and fewer playground altercations because of the breakfast programs. This year the Day Star Foundation—which is a non-government organisation—is coming on board to assist Curran with organising its breakfast program.

The family contact program looked at parent participation. The results of this program were greater access for community members to vital support agencies; enhanced communication between home and school; increased involvement of community members in the school decision-making

process; and greater community understanding and trust. So it is setting a parameter for some of the families involved in the school.

The schools have anti-bullying programs. Curran's program is called "Bugs not Bullies", and Guise has a program as well. Both schools have evaluated their programs, and reported reductions in the number of suspensions—a 75 per cent reduction at Curran in the number of detentions—as a result of the anti-bullying programs. I have a separate slide for the Schools as Communities program, which I will talk to later—the same with Primary Connect. These are very significant programs for the communities and the schools.

Exploring Together was a program for Guise and Curran public schools. It looked at relationship building, with a focus on parents and children. Two sessions were held; 16 families attended; and there was a positive response noted from participants. That was a 2005 program. James Meehan High School, in a joint agency approach with Police, ran Blue Light discos. Four, or perhaps five, were held in 2005, with 120 to 180 students. It has been an established part of the school calendar to have that interagency approach.

Curran Public School has a boys program—for boys at risk—to improve relationships, reduce bullying, and improve self-esteem. The school's evaluation indicates behavioural improvement, especially in improve skills, talking about issues and resolving conflict. James Meehan has a boys program, run by the head teacher, special education. It monitors three boys programs in the support unit, and a year 8 learning support team monitors the year 8 boys class. The boys camp was successful in 2004 and was running in December 2005. A group of 8 identified boys have been withdrawn twice a week to be involved in hands-on building projects and social skills. Again, that was a successful program.

The peer counselling program is a foundation program within the school for addressing long-term counselling needs of students experiencing relationships issues with other students. A welfare teacher trains and co-ordinates the programs and releases from classes two days a week. More than 50 years 9 to 11 students are currently trained at this technique. Students that have experienced difficulties previously are selected for training as peer counsellors. Following acute incidents, students are referred to be matched with a peer counsellor by any member of the welfare team. There were 150 referrals made in 2005.

Year 7 mentor coaching program: each student in year 7 is monitored by one of the year 7 team members. The mentor collects books, acts as a support person, and if necessary acts as a tutor. Information that is learnt about the student can be shared with the rest of the team via regular team meetings. Students communicated with their mentor via a journal. The journal is written on a daily basis and provides a good starting point for discussion. Analysis of the process suggests that the school would be looking at a more formal process. The after school homework centre is a targeted funding initiative monitored by the committee with the school. The centre is open to students on Monday and Thursday afternoons, from 3 to 5, and is manned by teachers from the school. Average attendance in 2005 was 15 students per session.

The Mac Thing Tutorial Centre establishes a post compulsory part-time program for young people, providing continuing contact with education. Very alienated youths who normally would not have a transaction with school engage in this centre. The program is operated by the high school and supported by TAFE and community volunteers. A committee meets fortnightly to monitor and manage the program. The Mac Thing Tutorial Centre has catered for 32 post compulsory students in 2005. Seven students have returned to full-time high school; six have moved on to TAFE; 1 student exited to employment. The remainder are still enrolled. The program is funded and evaluated as part of the PAS program.

**The Hon. Dr ARTHUR CHESTERFIELD-EVANS:** What is PAS?

**Mr PHELPS:** Priority Action Schools Program. It is a statewide initiative. I have a slide later to work through what that is all about, too. In 2005 the school initiated alternative curriculum delivery and learning structure for year 7—a program I have not seen any other schools, I might add. There was a complete restructure of year 7 teaching and learning programming involving a middle-school model, isolating year 7, rewriting courses, team teaching, integrated learning and monitored

implementation of quality teaching practice. Year 7 team met and reviewed progress weekly. Evaluation of the program is currently in progress, as a new program. The anticipated benefits include literary gains, improved social skills and development of more independent learning. I have visited that program on a number of occasions and the positives to me are the interactions between the teachers and the staff and the students, and the greater engagement in learning. The principal participated in teaching that program last year.

The home reading tutor program at James Meehan was administered and funded as part of the Priority Schools Funding Program [PSFP], which has been taken over by PAS. Two executive staff manage and monitor the initiative throughout the year. Students were tutored in the first semester, and 23 students in the second semester. The program is one of the initiatives that significantly contributed to value-added data in year 8 ELLA results. With regard to business links, James Meehan school has a well-established business connection with the law firm of Minter Ellison. This has provided students with opportunity for extended mentoring, work and placements and excursions. Financial support from the company has helped to provide the school with a small van for transporting up to 12 people. In 2005, 23 students were mentored fortnightly by staff from Minter Ellison and four students have attended work experience placement positions with firm this year, and for each of the past two years. The program is continuing this year and is seen as a significant program.

With regard to multicultural programs and English as a second language [ESL], a range of ESL activities is monitored by various members of the school executive, and ongoing support and monitoring are undertaken through classroom programs. In addition, role class teachers at James Meehan act as mentors assisting with assessment tasks and homework. Aboriginal students are supported by Aboriginal education assistance [AEA]. The support for AEA is provided by both deputies at James Meehan and is monitored by school executives at Curran and Guise schools. There are significant programs for indigenous children at the three schools. With regard to youth partnerships with Pacific Islanders, I have a slide to talk to that a little later as well.

**The Hon. Dr ARTHUR CHESTERFIELD-EVANS:** Are we going to have any time for questions at the end of this presentation?

**Mr PHELPS:** I can stop and take questions. I think it is useful to have this background.

**CHAIR:** Keep going, sadly until the end of the programs, and then I think there will be some questions.

**Mr PHELPS:** Okay. James Meehan runs some additional programs. It has a Shine for Kids Program, which is a six-week program designed for eight students who have affected as a result having family members in gaol. That is being run by the deputy principal. There is a program with Burnside Reconnect, co-ordinated by the deputy principal, providing motivational workshops for students in years 7, 8 and 11. The Northern Macarthur Family Support Services and Burnside have a program co-ordinated by the deputy principal. Referrals are made by the Learning Support and Welfare Team. There have been six-week Living with Teenagers workshops for parents in turmoil, and anger management workshops for kids at risk, and associated programs.

The school has also been involved in mind matters. The school links' team of four staff plus a buddy from the School Links Program, implemented the action plan. Transition brokers in the employment category assist with work placements. The Salvation Army at a Macquarie Fields works with the school on a number of programs and last year ran workshops for year 9 students—the focus was Recognising Depression in Friends and Yourself—and currently they are working on some significant development of programs. Mission Australia also has worked with the schools, with programs co-ordinated by the deputy principal attending the school every Friday and providing support for students at the risk of disengaging from school. The other types of programs that these three schools run that are additional to the core curriculum activities.

**CHAIR:** I think at this stage we will have some questions. I will start. First, a comment: You have partly answered our questions about the issue of co-ordination because, clearly, an awful lot of work has been involved in all the agencies you have mentioned, government and non-government, to get all this up and running. Can you give the Committee an indication? Is this really atypical for

departmental schools, this range of different programs? In respect of Curran, Guise and James Meehan in particular, how much more is this than the average primary or high school? What implications are there for the staff and the extra support that they need to provide all these programs?

**Mr PHELPS:** I believe it is not typical of government schools necessarily. Each government school faces different contextual issues. The issue facing the schools servicing the Housing Commission is essentially one of alienation of youth from various socioeconomic services too, I think. I was the Disadvantaged Schools Consultant who serviced James Meehan High School back in the 1980s and I see that many of the issues are still current. I think the programs for these schools are innovative programs. They are programs that one will not necessarily find in all other schools, because there is not the need for them in respect of servicing Meehan clients. There is a great commitment by the teachers at the three schools, and the principals, to servicing those students. They have had a willingness to look at programs that go beyond normal practice to deliver an appropriate service for the students. The Mac Thing Program in particular I think is a program that should have world repute.

To me, the evidence is that these schools were viewed as a haven at the time of the disturbance. There was not one bottle thrown over the school fence. There was not one teacher's tyre slashed. The teachers did a magnificent job with the students and that was shown at the swimming carnival that was held at James Meehan school on the day following the disturbance. The number of kids that turned up to the swimming carnival was higher than it would normally have been. The police said in discussions with me that they believed that without the good will, the schools could not have established a climate where the kids feel safe, and the parents essentially feel safe. That comes down to a number of factors. We have the SaCC, we have Primary Connect and all these other programs that are working within the community and are valued by the community. Certainly, I would see that this work is atypical, but not beyond the commitment that the teachers put in, in other schools.

**The Hon. ROBYN PARKER:** How much of the great work that is a going on in these schools do your tribute to the leadership of the press wall, the deputy principal and others in those assorted positions?

**Mr PHELPS:** Leadership is really important. The leaders are committed to the programs. We have consistency on the staff in these schools now. For instance, the staff at Guise had to have what we call a nominated transfer this year. A staff member had to leave because of numbers. No-one wanted to leave. The staff have the commitment, and the leadership is channelling and focusing that commitment. We have very skilled leaders, who are very committed. I also think we have a very skilled and committed staff in the schools who are working for the best interests of the kids.

**The Hon. ROBYN PARKER:** Most people would think these schools are difficult to staff?

**Mr PHELPS:** They were certainly classified in that way. But they are also schools where teachers recognise that they can make a difference and can engage in innovative practice. If you are teacher who wants to engage in innovative practice, and to make a difference, it could be a school of first choice.

**The Hon. ROBYN PARKER:** It is encouraging to hear all of those things. I do not know whether you were here earlier when Mission Australia presented to us.

**Mr PHELPS:** No, I was not.

**The Hon. ROBYN PARKER:** The alarming thing about what they were saying is that they are running groups for young offenders who got right through the education system without even knowing that there were 26 letters in the alphabets, without basic numeracy and literacy skills, who had been expelled from schools for children with bad behaviour, or whatever you call them. Somewhere along the way we are not meeting the needs of those students. Is all of this translating into better results, and how was it that those young people are slipping through the cracks with all of this in place?

**Mr PHELPS:** For whatever reasons there are always going to be some kids who are very difficult. In trying to provide appropriate programs for those kids, which is what the Mac Thing does

for kids who cannot stay at school because, perhaps, of their violent behaviour, Macquarie Fields has set up an alternative placement. Six of those kids have returned to school and six of those kids have gone to TAFE. I have not expelled a student from that group of schools. Expulsions would come through me. There are suspensions. In the last 18 months I have not expelled a student. Maybe we need to tease out what appears to happen with what the reality is. I am not quite sure about that. Certainly students are suspended, but suspension rates are down in the three schools, significantly at Curran. As a result of those programs detentions have been brought down.

But I guess we are going to deal with kids who, sometimes, do not want to be at school for whatever reason and we need to work through those issues with their family and the school. As a last resort we move to things like suspensions. The purpose of a suspension is to give the school and the kid time out so that appropriate risk management strategies and return strategies can be put in place, and we work through that. But after a number of suspensions a student, for whatever reason, whether it is some kind of syndrome or combined with what is going on, enters into a behavioural school where there are special programs to work with them and there are reduced numbers of students and separate things are put in place. I do not know if I can say more than that.

**The Hon. ROBYN PARKER:** How can students get to year eight and not be able to add up 5 plus 7, not understand basic literacy skills and have a reading level of a year two student?

**Mr FILLINGHAM:** That is hard to answer generically, but with many of the students who would be in that category you have to realise that they do not have continuity of education in the one setting. Although we have schools providing wonderful programs, the likelihood of a high proportion of the population entry at kindergarten and continuing through that educational continuum is fairly small in some of these communities. When we talk about people falling through the cracks, they do not necessarily fall through the cracks in the one piece of the flooring. They are quite infrequently mobile, particularly in our housing estates. We tend to find that children move from school to school to school. It is not uncommon to have multiple schools, and sometimes more than a dozen schools, prior to their entering the secondary arena. Teachers certainly make as much effort as they can to try to bring those students back up. That is what the Learning Assistance Program is about, to which Mr Phelps referred. Certainly we aim to address those needs when we see them.

**The Hon. Dr ARTHUR CHESTERFIELD-EVANS:** We had some evidence that intervention programs for literacy are happening with the older kids. Are there enough special education places? How many special education schools are there for the kids who have challenging behaviour? Are there enough of them?

**Mr FILLINGHAM:** In terms of the placement, there are sadly different categories when you are referring to children with special needs. We have different categories from mild to moderate to severe, et cetera, and specific classes for those groups of children. These days the approach is for those children who have a mild learning disability, that it is preferable to have them in situ in a mainstream class with learning assistance to help them out. Certainly we are increasing the support we are giving to mainstream teachers to support children in those settings where we can. It is quite an educational debate as to whether or not children should be segregated or mainstreamed, but the general feeling for those with a mild disability is that mainstream is preferable.

**The Hon. Dr ARTHUR CHESTERFIELD-EVANS:** You are talking about disability?

**Mr FILLINGHAM:** Learning disability.

**The Hon. Dr ARTHUR CHESTERFIELD-EVANS:** Some are behavioural learning disabilities, some are intellectual disabilities and some are multiple or psychiatric even. But we are really talking about behavioural disabilities, are we, where you need high staff to student ratios?

**Mr FILLINGHAM:** Certainly in south-west Sydney and adjacent to Macquarie Fields we have the facilities at Glenfield for an array of children right from primary school through to secondary school whether it is behavioural disabilities or problems, emotional disturbances or learning disabilities. We have facilities in Campbelltown, and both of those places are accessible to the students from Macquarie Fields.

**The Hon. Dr ARTHUR CHESTERFIELD-EVANS:** When you say "disabilities", of the 15 per cent of kids who are not attending school do many of those end up in these other programs?

**Mr FILLINGHAM:** I think we have to be careful about the statistics that were shown. That does not say that 15 per cent of children do not attend school. That is the actual attendance rate, which means that if children are away, even for a day, then that is counted as a non-attendance. It is not that they are truanting or it is not that they do not go to school at all.

**The Hon. Dr ARTHUR CHESTERFIELD-EVANS:** But you need to unpack those figures for kids who tot up 250 days a year, or whatever it is and the kids who tot up 10 each.

**Mr FILLINGHAM:** The schools do.

**The Hon. Dr ARTHUR CHESTERFIELD-EVANS:** Obviously, the ones who are sick or whatever for a few days a year are pulling it down from 100 to the 95 or whatever and after that you are getting into problem areas. Can you unpack those?

**Mr FILLINGHAM:** Sure.

**The Hon. Dr ARTHUR CHESTERFIELD-EVANS:** These kids who are getting picked up by Mission Australia or the ones that we interviewed who were involved in the riots, or whatever, are falling right through the whole thing. They must be a subgroup within that group. Despite the fact that there is a school a Glenfield, or wherever, for them they are not getting there, are they?

**Mr FILLINGHAM:** I cannot comment on that.

**CHAIR:** We should also point out that the particular group that we are talking about are juvenile offenders.

**Mr FILLINGHAM:** Yes.

**CHAIR:** The program is funded by Juvenile Justice and through TAFE. We are talking about a small group and a rather extreme group. Nevertheless, a lot of other issues arise.

**Mr FILLINGHAM:** The more general response to your question is that where schools identify an attendance problem with a child we have a program called the Home School Liaison Officer Program and we have people who do as the name suggests, work with the families, work with the school to try to get those children into school with regular attendance. There are some children who are diagnosed as chronic school refusers, and we have a lot of work that is done with those children to try to get them into either a mainstream school setting or an alternative school setting, and make sure that for the mandatory schooling age they access appropriate education. Obviously, some children have massive difficulties in terms of their family and social setting that precludes them from being regular attenders, but we work as hard as we can with the Community Services, with the family and with the school to try to get those children to attend as regularly as they possibly can.

**The Hon. Dr ARTHUR CHESTERFIELD-EVANS:** In that a lot of these are funded by Juvenile Justice, in a sense you have missed the opportunity already to stop them from falling into the Juvenile Justice system, which, presumably, is infants or primary, is it not? What programs are there at that level, or even preschool?

**Mr PHELPS:** I think we are talking about a small percentage of kids. Currently there is a co-ordinator case management project that has been initiated as a result of discussions that have taken place with DOCS, the Department of Education and Training and a number of other facilities. They have had three meetings. They have identified six families that they have picked up to have a co-ordinated approach to and they are working things through. It is early days, I know, but the size of the problem over three schools at Macquarie Fields working with DOCS was six—six families have been picked up under that project with student welfare and his people.

**The Hon. Dr ARTHUR CHESTERFIELD-EVANS:** Does the Family First project identify kids at risk and, if so, do they get day care and preschool facilities?



**Mr PHELPS:** I cannot comment on that.

**CHAIR:** We really need to stick to the Department of Education and Training.

**Mr PHELPS:** I think you will find that some of those centres will come through the schools as community centres because that gives them some activities, not a preschool as such, but like a playgroup activity for children. There certainly is a focus on the preschool environment for early literacy and numeracy so that when those children start school they are not as far behind as they typically are from those communities. Certainly that is a major focus in our department, the early education, so that children, prior to coming to school at age 4½ or 5, actually have had some exposure to some educational experiences that give them some basic literacy and numeracy. The question that was put before about those people who are adolescents who have massive problems with literacy and numeracy by getting into the preschool years, the early years, we are trying to redress that. There is certainly a major focus on that.

**The Hon. KAYEE GRIFFIN:** In relation to the breakfast program he said there are 25 students from Curran attending but 60 from Guise. Given that virtually the same number of students attend each school, have you identified any reasons for the difference?

**Mr PHELPS:** No. I imagine it would be the availability of people, the personalities involved in putting it forward and the way that it is presented at the time. I do not know why there is the disparity.

**The Hon. KAYEE GRIFFIN:** I think you said that there are 15 students in the homework program. Is it at the two primary schools?

**Mr FILLINGHAM:** No, it is at the high school.

**The Hon. KAYEE GRIFFIN:** How long has the program been going and have the numbers increased?

**Mr PHELPS:** Ten years, and it has not changed appreciably.

**The Hon. KAYEE GRIFFIN:** So it has been pretty much 15 students each year who require assistance.

**Mr FILLINGHAM:** Not only require the assistance but who actually access the resource.

**The Hon. KAYEE GRIFFIN:** We have heard that there is a high rate of intergenerational unemployment in Macquarie Fields. I think you mentioned one or two programs. What other links in the community do you have in relation to employment opportunities for young people coming out of high schools?

**Mr PHELPS:** I will condense a number of slides I have.

**CHAIR:** You can leave things with us and we can pore over them later.

**Mr PHELPS:** Yes, I will. Essentially, the department has three programs generically that it runs in terms of employability and employment. They fall under career education, where a career teacher is available in each school; and the school-to-work program, which assists students to develop skills in self-management, initiative, enterprise, learning, communication, teamwork, planning and organisation, problem-solving, technology and cross-cultural understanding. That takes place more or less from years 9 to 12. There is an employment-related skills logbook with that program. There is also generically vocational education in schools with a number of frameworks for vocational training which leads to qualifications. Those industry frameworks are business services, construction, entertainment, hospitality, information technology, metal engineering, primary industries, retail and tourism. At James Meehan there are specific programs. Three frameworks are currently being offered—construction is one—that will often lead to TAFE or workplace opportunities.

TVET is students attending TAFE as part of their curriculum. That is also available at James Meehan. A transition broker from Centrelink deals weekly with students from age 15. The program provides support for disengaged youth and encourages them to stay at school. If they are not able to be maintained at school the program provides assistance with transition from school to work, for example, pre-apprenticeship courses, work experience, résumés and interview skills. Mission Australia provides youth pathways for students aged between 13 and 18. The program looks at re-engaging and supporting students. The Mac Thing I have already talked about. It has links to TAFE and students do a modified curriculum access at TAFE at the same time. In special education, students work in community and job placement one day a week. Students are linked to disability agencies that assist with employment opportunities. There is also TAFE's response.

**Mr FILLINGHAM:** I will quickly give you the details on that. TAFE New South Wales South Western Sydney Institute looks after the area. It has a college at Macquarie Fields. It is a relatively small college, but over the last four to five years they have particularly focused its delivery from specialised courses to more community-based courses. In terms of collaboration, they have a very big focus on partnering so that they can improve employment opportunities for the local community. The people that they are working with include the Commonwealth Rehabilitation Service, Campbelltown City Council—it works very closely—and the Department of Health. There is a program running through a church group from Mount Annan. Premier's Department programs are being accessed. There are Spectrum, TAFE New South Wales and the Wesley Mission and a group called Work Ventures. They are aiming to assist people in seeking jobs, to identify opportunities for them and also to give them the skills so that, once they get the job, they can actually retain it. It is interesting to note that one of the things that both schools and TAFE want to focus on is giving people a level of confidence that it is possible to get a job from a community such as Macquarie Fields. Career education and work education in schools does not wait until we are talking about 14 or 15-year-olds. The approach to our curriculum in primary schools is also to have a vocational component so that children are becoming aware of a whole lot of different employment opportunities. We may even use a Bob the Builder approach, using stories and scenarios and situations within the local community just to talk about what opportunities are possible in later life.

Today out at Macquarie Fields South Western Sydney has a women's festival. It is targeting young women from 12 to 24, particularly those who are parents and unemployed. Today there will be a whole series of activities to raise awareness of the employment opportunities, what help there is for job seekers, and what help there is once you get a job to retain it. One of the great barriers to young single mothers seeking employment is child care. So they are looking at alternative opportunities for them et cetera. TAFE is looking particularly at employment opportunities, dealing with some of the issues to do with drugs and alcohol, and particularly young women and self-esteem in the local community.

On the drugs and alcohol issue, one of the things that is becoming very important in terms of special education, and referring back to young people who are innumerate, is that recent evidence has come up about foetal alcohol syndrome, caused by the mother drinking during pregnancy. We recently had a seminar with an expert from the United Kingdom. Alcohol prevents the development of the parietal lobe in the brain. That is the mathematics processing part of the brain. Evidence is coming out from both educational and medical research that it is impossible to process mathematical issues if you do not have a parietal lobe. So we are going to have to rethink some of those things where we have evidence of alcohol abuse and the potential impact on the development of young children. It is fascinating to look at some communities to see the impact of drug and alcohol abuse in the early years of education. It is cutting-edge stuff. It has come out only in the last few months. We are certainly very interested in that.

On community partnerships, rather than bringing people into the college we are going out and delivering to the communities in outreach programs. Many of them are delivered in different sites, sometimes in the school and sometimes in the neighbourhood centres. The Department of Housing co-operates with TAFE to allow access for places to deliver that. There are youth centres. There is Centrelink at Ingleburn. We are working with the Benevolent Society and the Department of Health. Macquarie Fields TAFE has a large IT program. It has purchased a whole series of laptop computers to take to the community to work with the community to help educate people not in the laboratory situation within the college but in the community to give them some skills.

**The Hon. KAYEE GRIFFIN:** That leads into the next question. We have heard about a lack of co-ordination between services and so on. Would you care to comment on the department's view of the co-ordination and services working together, both government services and with NGOs, in the Macquarie Fields area?

**Mr FILLINGHAM:** I would certainly say, from what we have shown you in the slides today and what we have talked about, the actual co-ordination between government agencies and NGOs is extremely high from the education point of view. Many of those programs which are happening across the three schools happened because we work so closely with them. We certainly know that we work extraordinarily closely with DOCS and the police and with NSW Health in some instances, but certainly we are working on a continual basis with DOCS and NSW Health. Peter Phelps might like to comment on some of the specifics of that, but my view, from an education viewpoint, is that there are very high levels of co-ordination, very high levels of co-operation, and this has been in existence for quite some time.

All those programs with the three schools did not start last year. As Bruce Sander mentioned, the homework program and the co-operative thing, the Mac Thing, et cetera, have been going for many years—in many cases, 10 or 15 years. I would certainly say that in the last few years there has been a high level of co-operation across those agencies and the non-government sector, particularly working with people such as the Benevolent Society, the Salvation Army and the Wesley Mission. They do a fine job at working with us and are very keen to have that interaction. I can honestly say that I have had absolutely no problems at all in getting a current co-ordinated approach to issues happening within the school.

**Mr PHELPS:** At an individual director level, I meet regularly with Macquarie Fields command. We have had very close relationships. The schools meet regularly with the home school liaison officer and the police youth liaison officer, Constable Cotter, who is highly regarded and very accessible. With the police, we find there is a very good relationship. With DOCS, we have the co-ordinated case management project existing and normal DOCS protocols for referrals. We think that works. With housing, I meet regularly with housing regarding renewal plans not only for Macquarie Fields but for the Minto regeneration. There seems to be significant co-ordination of that aspect. There is a senior officers' group that meets regularly and I participate or Kim participates in that. There is a Campbelltown offshoot that meets regularly and the schools meet regularly with non-government agencies, as appropriate, and I am invited when it is at an appropriate time.

**CHAIR:** To sum up from the department's point of view, the co-ordination is there and it sounds as if it is a fairly sort of generous and co-operative relationship. It is not something that is being forced on people.

**Mr FILLINGHAM:** That is an appropriate description. I would certainly endorse that.

**CHAIR:** To what extent is the department involved in the State Government in the plan that is being developed and the community forum and so on? Can you tell us a bit about your involvement and any comments you have on that plan?

**Mr FILLINGHAM:** We are involved at three different levels, I would imagine, but all co-ordinated. I am a member of the group that Col Gellatly of the Premier's Department setup. That was set up with the heads of government departments who have a responsibility for services within the Macquarie Fields area. That was a very small committee that Col had as a very strategic group, and there is a working group that Peter represents because he is the local school education director with a local arrangement, and then the three principals in the local schools are also on other working parties to make sure they are actually intimately involved with it.

Our department has been involved in all of those stages, right from the commencement of the work that the previous local member, the Hon. Craig Knowles, set up. We were involved in those and then Dr Gellatly came in and formed that senior officers group, or the heads of department group. We were involved in developing a plan. There was a project officer who was assigned out of the Premier's Department to put that together. She worked with individual departments to determine who would be the lead agency in the particular programs. We then sort of worked with those across agencies to make

sure who would then be the support group working on it, so we have certainly been involved, right from day one.

**The Hon. Dr ARTHUR CHESTERFIELD-EVANS:** Could you give us a breakdown of the truancy rates? I am interested in this because I think it does say how many kids, presumably, are at risk and how high that risk is, does it not? If one kid is absent over a hole year, obviously they need to be followed up.

**CHAIR:** This is something that you could take on notice.

**The Hon. Dr ARTHUR CHESTERFIELD-EVANS:** Yes. I am not asking you to do it off the top of your head.

**Mr FILLINGHAM:** The short answer is no.

**The Hon. Dr ARTHUR CHESTERFIELD-EVANS:** If we are going to get their concept of the magnitude of the problem, then we need to look at those rates and how absent those kids are, and how many kids there are who are not enrolled in a school at all—or is there no answer to that question?

**CHAIR:** Perhaps Katherine can talk to you later because clearly there is also the comment you made about kids who are very transient and have a high level of moving from school to school and the complexity that results in the figures. Perhaps if we work out what we put on notice and you can get back to us in due course.

**Mr FILLINGHAM:** We will certainly do that, yes.

**Mr PHELPS:** Yes.

**CHAIR:** And Arthur can tease that out later.

**Mr FILLINGHAM:** As I mentioned before, there is a big difference between truancy rates and attendance rates. We cannot say that because the attendance is 85 per cent, truancy is 15 per cent. There is not a logical connection there.

**The Hon. Dr ARTHUR CHESTERFIELD-EVANS:** I understand that.

**Mr FILLINGHAM:** That happens for all sorts of reasons. The truancy rate would be significantly less than the differential.

**CHAIR:** We will work out exactly what we want, to make the figures meaningful, and then we will put it on notice, I think, Arthur.

**The Hon. Dr ARTHUR CHESTERFIELD-EVANS:** Yes, but we might tease it out a little bit face to face before assuming that it is all going to be fixed immediately after, and we are going to get wonderful answers.

**CHAIR:** Except that we are already half an hour over time, and the figures will have to be on notice.

**The Hon. Dr ARTHUR CHESTERFIELD-EVANS:** Perhaps you can make some comments on the difference between truancy and absence and then justify which ones about truancy you are giving us.

**CHAIR:** There is a lot of global information on this and it is not just at Macquarie Fields. I think it is information that the Committee can get hold of.

**Mr FILLINGHAM:** Yes. It is a generic issue.

**The Hon. Dr ARTHUR CHESTERFIELD-EVANS:** That would be good if we did. It is specific to your area, of course.

**Mr FILLINGHAM:** That is not a problem. We can provide that to the Committee.

**CHAIR:** We will move on. We have asked specifically the lessons that the department learned from the incidents at Redfern and how they are being applied. Perhaps we should have asked it more broadly. I guess we have an interest because this Committee got the job of doing the inquiry into Redfern as well. We have obviously developed an interest in areas of high social disadvantage, but also the place management approach and so on.

**Mr FILLINGHAM:** Yes.

**CHAIR:** Can you tell us what if anything the department has learned from those disturbances? You may think that they are not really similar and that applying them to Macquarie Fields is not an appropriate thing because the areas are very different, but we are interested in your comments.

**Mr FILLINGHAM:** I obviously cannot comment in detail on Redfern-Waterloo because I was not involved in that, but I have had discussions with my counterpart in the Sydney region, Dr Phil Lambert, who I understand gave evidence to that particular inquiry just to talk about what the similarities are and what the lessons were and the issues that came out of it. There are three key points that I think I understand came from that as far as we are concerned, and that is the need for interagency co-ordination, and particularly determining a lead agent and then the other agents who would co-operate with us. I believe that what we are doing at Macquarie Fields and what we have done since with the structures that were set up under the previous local member, as I mentioned, and under Col Gellatly, they actually very much had that approach.

We as a department, of course, are very committed to that. As I indicated in answer to your question in terms of my view of the interagency co-ordination and co-operation, it has been extremely good for quite a period of time. So that was not an issue that we had to face because the basics were there, and it was bringing it together and formalising it, I guess, around the specific incident and the things that that brought to notice in the local community. The second thing that was really important I think was that there is a huge raft of issues. There was a need to get together, crystallise thinking and identify what the key issues were. I believe the committee again did that very well and the work of the project officer was in working across departments to identify what was in strategies to meet those needs. That came out into a couple of things that really had a great bearing for us in education. One is the need to be a participant in the employment strategy and to recognise that one of the solutions for these communities is to get employment, which is obviously the best pathway to alleviating poverty.

So we were giving kids that hope that (a) you can get a job, you have got the skills and there are opportunities, and indeed even to open their eyes to the fact that there are opportunities beyond the local community, particularly when you have intergenerational unemployment. Many young people do not really understand what jobs are out there. Their particular horizons are fairly limited. I am sure that our colleague Bruce Sander either has done, or could, tell great stories particularly about the Minter Ellison arrangement with his school. Having spoken with Philip Clark, who was the previous CEO of Minter Ellison, one of the things he identified in talking with these young people was the fact that many of them, when they came to visit him, had never been to Sydney, had never been to the city, had never seen the harbour, had never seen the ocean, had never seen a ferry and had never been in a high-rise building.

Their response to visiting an enormous company like Minter Ellison and seeing the various aspects—from hospitality, to IT, to administration, to paralegals, to legal services and so on—was an absolute eye-opener. There are ongoing links formed in that way. Further links have been established through a program called Australian Business Community Networks, which we have set up with a wide array of companies. The companies have donated their time, expertise and staff to work with our schools, not only Macquarie Fields but also other schools in south-west Sydney. That is extraordinary. The employment strategy needs to work with little kids, letting them know that there are jobs, and that they should have a go and try. There is a need for numeracy and literacy if they are ever going to

follow a path that does not lead them to the juvenile justice system. Admittedly, a very small proportion end up in that system, but we must give those children hope.

The other thing that came out of Redfern-Waterloo was the early years focus—I have mentioned that before—particularly the prior-to-school experiences and the great importance of working in kindergarten, year one, year two. One of the big positives in the department over the past few years has been reduced class sizes in kindergarten, year one and year two. Teachers will confirm that has made an enormous difference. Because the classes are so much smaller, they can work very closely with the children, irrespective of the level that they bring to school, to bring them on much more quickly and hopefully not have the problems mentioned by the previous witnesses.

The last point is one that I understand was typified in Redfern-Waterloo. Mr Phelps spoke about it and honourable members will see that it is dear to our hearts; that is, the fact that schools are havens. The parents said they must send their kids to school, even during the disturbances, because that is where they are safest, that is where they were being looked after, that is where they feel they belong. I believe the same message came out of Redfern-Waterloo that we have brought today from Macquarie Fields.

**CHAIR:** When Dr Greg Stewart spoke earlier today in relation to the Sydney south-west health area he mentioned that nine of the ten most disadvantaged postcodes were in that area. He was, I suppose, ensuring that we did not stigmatise Macquarie Fields or Redfern-Waterloo.

**Mr FILLINGHAM:** Yes.

**CHAIR:** Much of what you are saying are things that the department tries to ensure are happening in some of those other areas as well.

**Mr FILLINGHAM:** Absolutely.

**CHAIR:** You probably have something like the same percentage and the education boundaries are similar.

**Mr FILLINGHAM:** They are very similar. In our region we would certainly have the most disadvantaged communities in the State.

**CHAIR:** In that sense, is Macquarie Fields not particularly different? Is it one of the whole series of communities that need special attention, but several need it, not just—

**Mr FILLINGHAM:** Not just Macquarie Fields. We have a number of locations that have similar issues, particularly those around housing estates. In the Minto-Campbelltown area there is the Claymore community. A number of those communities are facing similar issues. If we were presenting evidence today about the programs in those schools, there would be same list of additional things. They are well beyond the sorts of things that one would find in schools close to the city, north of the harbour, Strathfield or Parramatta. They would be very different programs. We pride ourselves in the State system that what we do is meet the local needs. As honourable members can see, in the Macquarie Fields schools they go well beyond what is expected in mainstream curriculum and policy. We find every avenue to meet the needs of the children in those communities.

**CHAIR:** That leads to question seven. Did the department feel the need to conduct any particular inquiry or investigation as a result of the Macquarie Fields incidents?

**Mr FILLINGHAM:** No, there was no formal inquiry or investigation. There certainly was, from Mr Phelps' point of view as school education director, mine as regional director and the principals, a lot of discussion and communication, and looking at what we are doing and how we think we are meeting needs, what evidence we have and so on. We have a school self-evaluation program on a cyclic basis. Schools have to evaluate a curriculum issue and another issue of interest to the school, report back annually and make it part of the school's three-year plan. We looked at that across the Curran, Guise and James Meehan schools, and we were confident that the programs being conducted were being developed or in train or evaluated. In the formal sense of an inquiry or review, no.

**Mr PHELPS:** I formally met with my principals to discuss various strategies when Mr Knowles initiated his first committee. What Mr Fillingham is saying about the self-evaluation process is critical. The schools told me that they were havens and that they had very effective programs. They were being evaluated and there was the question of the autonomy of the school and meeting local needs. They were very concerned about external programs being foisted on them that were not meeting local needs. That was one of the things that arose from those discussions. That was something the schools wanted me to put forward today.

**Mr FILLINGHAM:** One of the risks is that there are lots of beautiful ideas that come out of the woodwork where people are very well meaning and want to bring them in. But they do not necessarily meet the specific needs of that particular group. We had to explore those options and have discussions and see whether it met the needs of our school community. In at least two cases it was not considered appropriate to continue them.

**CHAIR:** One of the things you do not want to come out of this inquiry is armchair experts saying something would be a great idea and why do we not foist it on Macquarie Fields.

**Mr FILLINGHAM:** That is true. As honourable members can see, is it certainly not a one-size-fits-all solution. It has to be tailored to serve the communities. We believe that our communities are doing that very well. It is interesting that Curran and Guise, two schools of approximately the same size separated by one main road, have some distinct differences. That was identified in the breakfast program. I did not realise until I was a member of this group, but they service two different housing communities. Using the word "tribal" might be a bit too strong, but honourable members can talk to community members about it and they will agree that there are some differences in the two communities. One of our programs is primary connecting at Guise and we have schools and community schools at Curran that are shared. However, there was a strategy to ensure it was not all on one site or the other. Of course, Macquarie Fields is not all housing estate; there is a significant number of private housing areas. That was one of the good things about the committee that Col Gellatly put together, having representatives from the Macquarie Fields broader communities, not just the housing estates.

**CHAIR:** We will leave it there. Thank you very much.

**Mr FILLINGHAM:** Schools develop programs through agencies and initial project funding. They expressed a concern to me that some of these programs they initiate have initial success, but then they have difficulty finding ongoing funding. If we are recognising the work the schools do as being very successful, that is a consideration we must take on board.

**CHAIR:** Many of the NGOs have made similar comments. Please provide the notes that were referred to.

**Mr PHELPS:** Would you like them electronically?

**CHAIR:** Yes. As far as I remember, the only question you are taking on notice relates to truancy, attendance rates, transients and so on and the kids who fall through the cracks in a variety of ways and the outcomes.

**Mr FILLINGHAM:** That information can be made available.

**CHAIR:** Thank you very much for appearing before the Committee and for your presentation.

**Mr FILLINGHAM:** Thank you for the opportunity.

**(The witnesses withdrew)**

**DOUG TAYLOR**, Head of Community Partnerships, WorkVentures, 418A Elizabeth Street, Surry Hills, sworn and examined:

**CHAIR:** Have you received questions from the Committee?

**Mr TAYLOR:** I have. I also have a short statement to make.

**CHAIR:** Would you like to make an opening statement?

**Mr TAYLOR:** Yes. In Australia we still have significant levels of poverty, despite our growing national prosperity. We see it in socially and economically excluded communities where the signs of marginalisation include poor education, crime, poor health, multi-generational unemployment and homelessness. The work of Professor Tony Vinson demonstrates that much of that poverty is concentrated in a small number of communities, both rural and urban. In that context the Macquarie Fields disturbances occurred and WorkVentures believes that with a similar chain of unfortunate events similar things could happen in many of the public housing estates that we work in, because of the latent sense of hopelessness and marginalisation.

WorkVentures would like to propose some principles and concepts for addressing the underlying causes that we think are most critical in addressing these issues. These are the things that form our agenda for community economic development. The principles are: We need to recognise and build on the assets that individuals and communities possess, not just focus on the deficits; stable and sustainable employment is the best single strategy to enable individuals and families to move out of poverty. There is no quick fix. We must commit to work with communities for the long haul and not pretend that problems created over decades can be fixed in the short time. Neither is there a silver bullet. Any solution will require multiple, integrated interventions covering social as well as economic development. All three sectors of our society are critical; that is government, business and the citizen sectors must play an active role along without excluded communities.

The problems are far too entrenched and too systemic to imbed lasting change without each sector playing its necessary role in making significant changes in the ways of operating. There is a great importance on building on both bridging and bonding the social capital. For us, social enterprises can provide needed services, generate jobs, create career pathways and help build social and economic skills—and are an important vehicle that has been seen in United Kingdom's third-way programs. Changes will be required. Perhaps there are incentives to locate employment where disadvantaged people live and to encourage employers to discover the benefits of hiring people with little past employment and/or some form of disability for the employees and for the whole community.

In Macquarie Fields and the other communities in which we work WorkVentures is seeking to facilitate the development of a cross-sector coalition of agencies to work with disadvantaged communities, on building sustainable communities that have demonstrated evidence of significant improvements in economic and social wellbeing. For us this would be the real test of whether we can reinvent our sector and our society.

**CHAIR:** Within that set of principles can you tell us about WorkVentures itself, your role, to whom you provide services, what success you have had in a new measure it, all those things that are in the first of the questions that you have been sent. In addition can you address funding and staffing, because it is good for the Committee to have a sense of what you are about.

**Mr TAYLOR:** WorkVentures' mission is building communities that work. Fundamentally we are about social and economic development. We do that with a social enterprise philosophy. We are a not-for-profit organisation, but we operate both commercial and community activities. For us that is a way of creating sustainability, if we can develop other income-generating activities that do not rely on grants and funding from government. We work through partnerships with local communities and a number of corporations in partnerships. Minter Ellison was mentioned in the previous presentation, and they are a partner of ours in a number of our activities. We also partner with all levels of government.



In Macquarie Fields we operate what we call a connect centre; we have a number of connect centres across Sydney including at Claymore, Waterloo and Woolloomooloo as well as Macquarie Fields. The connect centres are fundamentally about community economic development. The range of activities offered in our connect centres are IT access and training, a range of employment training programs. At the moment we have two Federally funded employment training programs through Local Answers out of Family and Community Services. Those programs specifically work with parents, engaging parents and looking at employment pathways. We are about to commence an enterprise facilitation project that will work through public housing estates, Macquarie Fields being one of them, and Foster Enterprise, to help local people develop hobbies, skills and passions into income-generating activities in a way of creating a sustainable livelihood for their household.

There is a range of other employment training initiatives, as a registered training organisation we are able to do all sorts of training and have done business administration training and call centre training in that community in Macquarie Fields. We also operate job clubs part with the local church, and support groups with the local church. There is a mix of community and employment economic development activities. We have a partnership with Minter Ellison, who provide pro bono solicitors who outreach into the public housing estate providing legal advice and referral services to the residents. They have been extremely successful in the local communities.

We are about to commence a new program in partnership with AGL, a large Australian energy company. It is about helping people in the community become more energy efficient thereby benefiting the environment and also benefiting households by saving money on their bills. That will commence in July. It is that range of communities and economic development activities that we operate.

**CHAIR:** Who is "we" and how do you decide what to focus on?

**Mr TAYLOR:** A couple of ways. Obviously we are about responding to local needs, discerning what local needs are in the communities but also responding to opportunities with our partners, and I have mentioned only a few of our corporate partners. There are a number of others, such as Microsoft. Microsoft played a role with funding the establishment of our centre four years ago and provided recurrent funding to provide IT training in that community, free software, and other things. It is that sort of mix. In answer to the question about resourcing our activities, we receive no recurrent funding for our infrastructure costs. In effect the only external funding we receive is for particular projects, which makes things quite challenging. WorkVentures, through our income-generating activities, subsidise the deficit, which is about \$50,000 every year that we, in a sense, fundraise to sustain that facility.

To create sustainability we utilise volunteers from the local communities and from outside, from other organisations. The New South Wales Department of Housing provides a rent-free facility within Macquarie Fields. We have a mix of other types of funding that is included within our activities. I mention also we receive no State Government funding for that mix of programs.

**CHAIR:** Except for the in-kind type of assistance such as the house.

**Mr TAYLOR:** That is right, and that is a pretty important one.

**The Hon. KAYEE GRIFFIN:** When did WorkVentures start? How did it start?

**Mr TAYLOR:** The organisation?

**The Hon. KAYEE GRIFFIN:** Yes.

**Mr TAYLOR:** This year is our 25th anniversary, so that is a timely question. We started in La Perouse as a community agency running a whole range of things including vacation care programs and traditional community services in La Perouse. About 15 years ago we made a significant shift as an organisation and fundamentally changed to thinking that the way out of poverty for most of our clients was employment. That was really the only sustainable way out of poverty. So we made a significant shift to working on unemployment programs. That has meant that today we subcontract to the Federal Government to run job network programs, not in Macquarie Fields but in other

communities across Sydney. We are a registered training organisation and run a whole range of training programs in the disadvantaged communities that I mentioned before through our network programs.

We also have a range of other community activities, as I have outlined. Another example of that would be our PC reuse program. We pick up every decommissioned PC from Westpac nationally, refurbish them and sell them at cost to low-income households. We distribute about 5,000 PCs across Australia to low-income households for \$250. That is an example of a social enterprise. It receives no funding; it relies on sales. Obviously the challenge is to drive down the price for our customers but to also create a sustainable outprice.

A large part of our business is that we run a commercial IT repair business, whereby we are competing with large players. That business started out as a small employment training program, working only with disadvantaged people, at the time that PCs started to come onto the market, helping them learn how to repair PCs. It has grown into a \$10 million business that employs about 80 people, most of whom have come out of disadvantaged backgrounds. It is another social enterprise that we have been working on for some years now. It is a real mix of activities across the community and the economic developments base that we operate.

**CHAIR:** I think you said that your IT enterprise employs 80 people—who have been your clients I guess?

**Mr TAYLOR:** Absolutely.

**CHAIR:** What else can you tell us about your staffing?

**Mr TAYLOR:** We have 180 staff. Most of our activities operate in Sydney and Melbourne, but the bulk of it is certainly in Sydney. Our turnover is \$18 million, and the activities are along the lines I have mentioned: commercial business, employment and training, and our community activities. What we are doing in Macquarie Fields is an example of our community activities.

In Macquarie Fields, we do not have a dedicated staff person; we have a manager who manages connect centres across a number of public housing estates. So we very much rely on partners working with us in the local community, and on volunteers to support our activities in that community.

We are about to start a new program in Airds, which is one of the five public housing estates in the Campbelltown local government area. That is the next step on from our connect centre: that we will build on everything that I have talked about today but have a much stronger emphasis on enterprise. In that centre will be a functioning on-site business, employing local people but obviously responding to market needs.

We have just been doing a search process. We have an investor who is willing to invest in starting up a new business. We think that is a critical way of making a significant difference for local communities, given that we believe that employment is the pathway out of poverty. One of the great challenges, particularly for public housing estates in Campbelltown, is access to employment, and appropriate and relevant employment. So social enterprise is a very good bridge for highly disadvantaged people to move into mainstream employment given the barriers and challenges they face.

**CHAIR:** For how long have you been involved in Macquarie Fields?

**Mr TAYLOR:** We have been involved in Macquarie Fields since 2001. It was, in a sense, our first connect centre, and out of that grew a partnership with the Department of Housing and Westpac, who funded the rollout of those centres to the other public housing estates I have mentioned.

**The Hon. Dr ARTHUR CHESTERFIELD-EVANS:** It sounds as though you are a major business working as a non-government organisation. Is that what you are doing? Are you a tax-exempt organisation that started as a charity and grew into a business, or vice versa?

**Mr TAYLOR:** We are a registered not-for-profit organisation and have DGR [deductible gift recipient] status, though we do operate like a number of not-for-profit organisations. DGR is the tax office's classification for income—a tax-exempt charity, basically. In a sense, we bridge those two streams of commercial activity and community activity, given that all our profits do not go into shareholders, they go into Macquarie Fields and the other communities we work in, to subsidise our community activities. But there are a number of large NGOs that operate commercial activities as well, as a way of creating sustainability for their activities.

**The Hon. Dr ARTHUR CHESTERFIELD-EVANS:** The commercial activities allow you to put \$50,000 more into the Macquarie Fields area than you get out of it? Is that the bottom line?

**Mr TAYLOR:** Absolutely. Without our own activities, we would not be able to operate in Macquarie Fields because we have no recurrent funding base to support those core infrastructure costs.

**The Hon. Dr ARTHUR CHESTERFIELD-EVANS:** But you would be selling computers, would you not, the \$250 ones?

**Mr TAYLOR:** Yes, certainly through our connect centres we do sell computers. But there is certainly no margin in that program. We are obviously trying to drive down prices, so the \$250 is really just covering our costs; there is no margin in that for the organisation. It is not a profit-making activity; it is a way of trying to create social outcomes.

**The Hon. Dr ARTHUR CHESTERFIELD-EVANS:** Have you tendered for government tasks to get money?

**Mr TAYLOR:** Yes. As I mentioned before, we have two projects that are operating in Macquarie Fields that are Federal Government funded. Though, the contribution from Federal Government-funded projects and other government-funded projects to core infrastructure costs is often quite limited.

**The Hon. Dr ARTHUR CHESTERFIELD-EVANS:** Marginal costs at work?

**Mr TAYLOR:** Yes. It covers the project cost, but to cover that \$50,000 I spoke about, it makes a small contribution.

**The Hon. Dr ARTHUR CHESTERFIELD-EVANS:** How big are your projects there, in dollar terms?

**Mr TAYLOR:** With regard to the two FACS-funded projects, one of which commenced early last year, it is \$300,000 over three years. We are about to commence another one in the next few months, which will be of a similar scale.

**The Hon. Dr ARTHUR CHESTERFIELD-EVANS:** What are they called, and what do you have to do for them?

**Mr TAYLOR:** The first one, which commenced last year, is a training program for parents in the public housing estate in Macquarie Fields. It responds to the needs that are perceived by local people, and uses that as a way to create a pathway into employment or other accredited training. We are running educational programs for parents on parenting and tacking onto the back of that IT training, as a way of creating a link to connect to an employment outcome.

The other project, which will commence soon, is an enterprise facilitation project. This is a project that will be working with a number of communities in the public housing estates across Macarthur, identifying people who have a passion—it could be craft; it could be anything of that nature—and working with those people to make that an income-generating activity should they wish to, as a way of supporting their livelihoods and their families.

**The Hon. IAN WEST:** Is there accreditation? Do people receive certificates?

**Mr TAYLOR:** Yes.

**The Hon. IAN WEST:** Can you give us examples?

**Mr TAYLOR:** Yes. WorkVentures is a registered training organisation [RTO]. As an RTO, on our scope we have a number of courses that we can train in. Obviously in IT there is a whole range of IT skills courses. We also run courses in business administration, call centre, as well as IT technical training, that is, training people to be technicians, which we do not do in the communities in which we work but which we use in our commercial activities.

**The Hon. IAN WEST:** Can you give us the statistics on how many of the 180-odd staff are paid staff and how many are volunteers?

**Mr TAYLOR:** They are all paid staff.

**The Hon. IAN WEST:** And there are volunteers on top of that?

**Mr TAYLOR:** Across the organisation, we would have in the vicinity of 40 volunteers. That is a mix of people from the public housing estates who are working in these connect centres. The rest would come from our corporate partners, who engage in a whole range of activities. Some would be in the pro bono legal advice service with Minter Ellison, which I mentioned, and others would be in advising us on a range of projects—pro bono-type services that they would offer us as an organisation to help build our capacity.

Another example is the AGL energy efficiency program, which is about to commence in Macquarie Fields but—in fact, on *Stateline* last week there was a story about it—just recently we ran a big event in the public school in Claymore, to educate students on energy efficiency. We were working with volunteers from our corporate partner AGL, who run some fantastic programs there.

**CHAIR:** How do you measure outcomes? How do you evaluate your success? How do you tell yourselves and others that you think something is coming out of what you do? What you are doing is innovative and perhaps not measurable compared with lots of other programs.

**Mr TAYLOR:** It is quite difficult. I think we have grappled with it for a while now, and we have started to make some headway in addressing this. I guess the traditional way of measuring outcomes is throughput: the number of people who participate in programs. I guess what that does not tell you is: What is the social impact? What does it mean for the community what does it mean for the individuals in that community? Have we changed people's lives?

We are starting to move more into that territory, from throughput to impact, and the metrics we are using to gauge whether we are successful are things like: Have people who have participated in our program become more connected with their community? Has their social capital, in a sense, been enhanced? An example of that may be that they now know some of their neighbours, that they are volunteering in the community, and things like that. Have people's skills been enhanced? Do individuals have a sense that their skills have increased and that they now, as a person, feel more employable?

I guess we can also measure that through accredited outcomes in a concrete sort of way. Ultimately, we measure employment outcomes. Of the people who have participated in our programs how many of them have moved on to employment? Ultimately, one thing that there is a challenge in measuring is sustainable employment. It is easy to measure somebody who gets a job, but would they be there six months later, or would they be there a year later?

**The Hon. IAN WEST:** And would it be for an hour, a week, or for longer?

**Mr TAYLOR:** Then there is the whole issue of underemployment, which is another thing altogether. It is a great challenge.

**CHAIR:** We have asked every witness who has come before us for their comments on the co-ordination, or lack of it, amongst different government and non-government organisations in

Macquarie Fields. Indeed, we asked the same question when we conducted our inquiry into Redfern and Waterloo. Do you have a comment on work ventures experience? You have already said a little about the people with whom you work.

**Mr TAYLOR:** Our experience in Macquarie Fields, working in particular with other non-government organisations, is very positive. We participate in a number of forums in the local community, inter-agencies and the employment task force that operates. We also participate in tenant-led forums. We find them to be very positive and co-operative. I guess that our comment would be that, in a sense, collaboration and working is the responsibility of everybody, but it can also be no-one's responsibility. That is the great challenge. If it is not somebody's responsibility to drive, monitor and evaluate it, it can happen in effect, but probably not to the scale that can have a significant impact.

So we see great value in things like place management. We see great value in a model like Communities for Children—a Federal Government program—where non-government organisations play a role in trying to keep organisations working collaboratively, and they monitor that and are funded to do that. There really are no non-government organisations that are funded to drive co-ordination and collaboration. Obviously, it is hard enough to keep your own projects on track.

**CHAIR:** You mentioned not only Macquarie Fields but also Airs and Claymore. What sort of conclusion have you come to in relation to the degree of co-ordination that affects and achieves things in those communities?

**Mr TAYLOR:** It is actually quite contrasting. Claymore had a place management program that I believe concluded in 2003. There was a significant impact in that community. Prior to that, in the late 1990s, there were enormous social problems. I think there were a number of murders and the like. After investment in place management, significant change was made in that local community and there was a lot of collaboration. Perhaps the greatest thing that came out of that was that the tenants strongly participated in that initiative.

**CHAIR:** Was that in the community housing area in Claymore, in the Department of Housing, or both?

**Mr TAYLOR:** So far as I understand it, in both, certainly through Argyle Community Housing Inc. but also within public housing. So the result of that is a number of fantastic tenant initiatives. Tenants started up a laundromat and a co-operative. All of that happened with co-ordination through agencies and with some investment in place management. Of course, the challenge is to sustain that. I think it lasted for three years. There is a challenge now to maintain that momentum. A committee attempted to do that, but it is difficult without being resourced. It is another great case study in the value of resourcing co-ordination.

Some time ago Airs was in a similar situation. We are just coming to the end of some fantastic community development work by the place manager up in Airs. In a sense we, as an organisation, are looking for opportunities in particular to do employment and economic development. We need a good base of community development in order to do some of that work. We are moving into Airs because there is a great platform for us to work on now. Once a community is out of crisis, it can then start to think about things like employment, education and enterprise. So that is a great opportunity.

**CHAIR:** Is the place management initiative essentially from the Department of Housing?

**Mr TAYLOR:** My understanding is that the Premier's Department funded it initially. Over time it has been topped up by the Department of Housing. They, in a sense, seconded it to council to run that project, which concludes in June.

**CHAIR:** How does Macquarie Fields compare to those two?

**Mr TAYLOR:** Obviously a lot of the social issues are quite similar. Some of the demographics and cultural profiles are different. But I think we would say we noticed a considerable difference in that. Because co-ordination is not somebody's responsibility collaboration cannot realise

the potential that it perhaps could in some of the other estates in which we have worked, such as Claymore and Airds.

**CHAIR:** Would the 2005-06 plan for Macquarie Fields address and overcome that problem?

**Mr TAYLOR:** I confess that I am not aware of this in detail, but my understanding of other things that are being done by various government agencies is that that is a significant way to address those problems.

**CHAIR:** Was there a gap at the time the disturbances occurred?

**Mr TAYLOR:** Certainly. I want to make it clear that there certainly was collaboration, but it was not realising its potential because it was not resourced effectively.

**The Hon. Dr ARTHUR CHESTERFIELD-EVANS:** You said there was a model in Claymore.

**Mr TAYLOR:** It was a place management model.

**The Hon. Dr ARTHUR CHESTERFIELD-EVANS:** You said that that model had done a lot of good in Claymore?

**Mr TAYLOR:** Yes.

**The Hon. Dr ARTHUR CHESTERFIELD-EVANS:** Does there have to be a crisis before a place management model is put in? Should there not be a place management model, under Vinson's recommendations, for every disadvantaged group?

**Mr TAYLOR:** That is one of the recommendations Tony Vinson made. He applauded the place management model but said that having it as a reactive and short-term initiative for, say, three years, can in a sense be very harmful. It is something that really should be sustained over a longer period. So it is critical.

**The Hon. Dr ARTHUR CHESTERFIELD-EVANS:** That research is 20 or 30 years old, is it not?

**Mr TAYLOR:** No. He has updated it every decade. I think it was released two years ago. It is called, "Community Adversity and Resilience—Postcodes and Poverty."

**CHAIR:** We invited Tony Vinson to talk to this inquiry. Apart from being very busy I think he had nothing specific to offer to us.

**Mr TAYLOR:** It is certainly worthwhile getting and incorporating that report. It is very useful.

**CHAIR:** We dealt with it in our Redfern inquiry.

**The Hon. Dr ARTHUR CHESTERFIELD-EVANS:** So the Claymore model has not been rolled out for other disadvantaged communities. Is that the bottom line? It exists as a one-off when someone draws attention to it. Macquarie Fields might be the next one. Is that right, or can you not answer that question?

**Mr TAYLOR:** I am not familiar with the policy, but I understand it has been a Premier's Department initiative. I am not privy to policy; I can only make observations.

**CHAIR:** And it is supplied in other places.

**Mr TAYLOR:** As I understand it.

**The Hon. Dr ARTHUR CHESTERFIELD-EVANS:** You said that you can only observe and that you were not privy to policy?

**Mr TAYLOR:** Yes.

**The Hon. Dr ARTHUR CHESTERFIELD-EVANS:** Do you think there is that sort of co-ordination in the Macquarie Fields area? You are running a program. Other people who have given evidence to this Committee are also running programs. Is there good co-ordination between the people who are running them? Do you get referrals from other groups?

**Mr TAYLOR:** Sure.

**The Hon. Dr ARTHUR CHESTERFIELD-EVANS:** Do you refer to them?

**Mr TAYLOR:** Absolutely. The point I have been trying to make is there has been good collaboration amongst agencies in Macquarie Fields for some time. But it could realise its potential a lot more with dedicated resources to manage and co-ordinate it. I think I said that the plan I have some awareness of—it was developed in response to the disturbances—goes a significant way towards addressing that and it resources that function. Otherwise, as I said earlier, if collaboration is everybody's responsibility, in effect, it becomes nobody's responsibility. Having a dedicated resource, whether it is through a lead agency or a funded program, makes a significant difference. I understand that this is part of the agenda.

**The Hon. Dr ARTHUR CHESTERFIELD-EVANS:** And that does not exist now? Which lead agency would you see doing that?

**CHAIR:** It is a 2005-06 plan. It is the plan about which we have been given details in the whole-of-government submission. The point is that, in comparative terms, Claymore and Airds had a more co-ordinated, place-based approach earlier.

**The Hon. Dr ARTHUR CHESTERFIELD-EVANS:** Can you let him answer the question?

**CHAIR:** He already did. I asked these questions earlier.

**Mr TAYLOR:** I feel like I have answered the question a number of times. I am not sure what specifically you are asking.

**The Hon. Dr ARTHUR CHESTERFIELD-EVANS:** I said who do you think should be the lead co-ordinating agency, knowing the people you know on the ground?

**Mr TAYLOR:** For Macquarie Fields?

**The Hon. Dr ARTHUR CHESTERFIELD-EVANS:** Yes.

**Mr TAYLOR:** I think there are a number of potential organisations that can play a role in that. There is the neighbourhood centre that operates within Macquarie Fields, there are organisations like the Benevolent Society and Burnside and a host of others. There are a range of organisations that could play that role. I am talking from a non-government perspective of course. The government approach is another issue altogether.

**The Hon. Dr ARTHUR CHESTERFIELD-EVANS:** When you answer that question do you do so on the basis of the people you know or on the basis that they are the most numbers of people or they are the best funded people or the best connected people? Let us get to the bottom of why people have these opinions and what success you are likely to get.

**Mr TAYLOR:** I think what I am looking for is, I guess, a mission alignment—organisations whose mission has some alignment with that side of responsibility potentially, whether it is overlapping potential.

**The Hon. Dr ARTHUR CHESTERFIELD-EVANS:** The neighbourhood centre presumably is a place where a number of agencies share space, is that right?

**Mr TAYLOR:** As I understand it, a neighbourhood centre is a centre that runs a number of projects, in a sense, of organisations outreached through that centre into the local community, and it also has hall and other office space that it lets out to other organisations.

**CHAIR:** We actually have the people from the neighbourhood centre and others involved in the co-ordination as our witnesses this afternoon.

**Mr TAYLOR:** They will be able to tell you in a lot more detail about that.

**CHAIR:** Could we move on because I am conscious of how much longer we have kept you? Questions 7 and 8 specifically focus on the disturbances in Macquarie Fields. What sorts of comments would you make on the relationship between the residents and the police, particularly young people and the police, before and after, and what are your impressions and knowledge of how the disturbances have affected the community and how things are this far after the event?

**Mr TAYLOR:** We have, I think, considerable insight into, particularly, the workings of the police in the local community through our legal advice service and referral service. Often our pro bono lawyers make referrals to the local police station and liaise with them. I spoke to those folk in preparation for this and they were very, very positive about the police, both before and after the riots. They said that the police in that community have been extremely co-operative and supportive anytime that our people have gone down there to make inquiries on behalf of a client, and I am talking of three, four times a month they would be doing that, so quite regularly. They are very positive about the police.

They also wanted me to make the point that since the riots they have noticed the police continuing with that theme, with that approach, in working with the local community, continuing to be responsive consulting agencies and, with the anniversary not so long ago, being proactive in talking to local agencies and trying to make some sort of positive response and addressing the issues before they arose. That was the feedback that our people on the ground gave to me in response to that.

In terms of the other question you wanted to ask about the impact on residents in that local community, again workers, volunteers and residents have relayed to me, and wanted to highlight, the most negative impact which they perceive to be the impact of the media in response to those riots in fundamentally fuelling a lot of the activity that followed the initial disturbance.

**CHAIR:** Actually fuelling the activity?

**Mr TAYLOR:** That was the sort of language that was used by people that reported it to me. Not intentionally fuelling it but I think fuelling it with helicopters constantly banging overhead; a number of people that were going into our centre, which is run in the heart of Macquarie Fields, and being pressured for interviews and harassed for interviews and to make comments; that all added to a climate that was not particularly useful. The other impact that we did notice probably six months following the riots was a significant downturn in access to our services. One would expect that something like a legal advice service would possibly see more access following something like that. In a sense it actually decreased. I cannot tell you statistics. Other services have had that experience too. So it had, I guess, a psychological impact on tenants in Macquarie Fields.

**CHAIR:** Because people turned in because there was an increased sense of despair or a lack of hope?

**Mr TAYLOR:** I think all those things—anxiety. I think all those things played some sort of part, and people perhaps not wanting to take a step outside the door.

**CHAIR:** But the feeling is that the community has recovered from that now?

**Mr TAYLOR:** Yes, that is the sense that we have got. Over the past few months there have been a number of events—lunches, barbecues and those sorts of things—trying to build some more



pride in the community. One of the other impacts, again given our employment focus, is that people have been anecdotally saying to us that since the riots as soon as they mention they are from Macquarie Fields in applying for a job the door closes. So incredible stigmatisation just by being in that suburb, in that postcode now because of its notoriety. So that is another significant barrier to folk who already have considerable barriers in moving out of poverty into employment. That is another thing we have noted.

**The Hon. IAN WEST:** Is there a reverse side to that coin? Is there a little bit of pride in the tribe? A little bit of badge of honour?

**Mr TAYLOR:** We have not detected that, I must say. Most of our work in the community to date—although this will change in the future—has been with more mature people, not so much young people. That may be the dynamic for the young people, I have no idea.

**The Hon. IAN WEST:** Have you got any sense that the media may have also contributed to that star quality of being part of the activity?

**Mr TAYLOR:** I could not really comment on that, given that our contact, as I said, has not been as strong with the young people, mostly the older people.

**CHAIR:** I think we can probably leave it there. If you feel that some of the preparation that you have done for today in talking to people—for which we thank you—we have not drawn out in our questioning, it would be really good if you could let Katherine know and we could talk to you or get you to put something in writing. We are conscious that first of all we kept you waiting and then we have possibly gone through the questions a bit faster than we otherwise would have because of our timetable.

**Mr TAYLOR:** Of course. That is no problem.

**CHAIR:** We thank you very much for coming.

**(The witness withdrew)**

**(Luncheon adjournment)**

**JANE McIVOR**, Co-ordinator/Manager, Macarthur Community Forum, PO Box 3477, Narellan, affirmed and examined:

**CHAIR:** Thank you for appearing before the Committee, Jane. Would you like to make an opening statement or introduction?

**Ms McIVOR:** I am here representing Macarthur Community Forum but I would also like to put into the mix the fact that I have had about 10 or 12 years experience in the local region, particularly working in Macquarie Fields and Minto about three years ago. We were also auspicing Glenquarie Neighbourhood Centre during the riots. There are some other perspectives within this.

**CHAIR:** Do you want to speak at all about the background before we move to questioning?

**Ms McIVOR:** I mention that so when you hear my evidence you understand that I have that background.

**CHAIR:** Tell us about the Macarthur Community Forum. What does it do? How long has it been around?

**Ms McIVOR:** Macarthur Community Forum was established in 1999 and it is the regional peak body for the Macarthur region, which covers the local government areas of Campbelltown, Camden and Wollondilly. The forum's main role is to resource and support the non-government sector across the Macarthur region and through that we play different types of roles. It can be on the ground training and mentoring or improving community services infrastructure and networking. We are the focal point for information and communication across the region, and that includes media coverage. We develop an agenda of regional needs and we advocate and lobby to address those needs.

We represent non-government organisations at a State level and we develop projects to address those regional needs. We promote Macarthur to the wider community. We do regional planning and research. We deliver a co-ordinated community response to government policies. We facilitate discussions on new models of service delivery; we develop local, regional and State linkages; and we prepare services for changes and things that are happening. An example of that is the DOCS funding reform at the moment. We are trying to prepare the region for that. You asked who is involved in the forum. It is all non-government and community service providers within the Macarthur regions—small, big and charities.

**CHAIR:** Are they actively involved?

**Ms McIVOR:** We have a member base of about 150 agencies and we have an email network of about 400. That is who we disseminate information to. We also work with government agencies not so much in a support role but in partnership with non-government agencies in the development of projects and co-ordinated approaches to service delivery. We also work very closely with State peaks, such as NCOSS, because that is the way that we keep informed about State issues that affect our local region.

You asked about successes. In recent years we have started to become recognised as the peak body for Macarthur. It takes a while to build a profile. We are definitely seeing a stronger network of services starting to work much more collaboratively together. We have started regional planning. So we are looking much more around a co-ordinated approach to regional planning. The organisation has grown from three to seven staff in the past 12 months. There seems to be a stronger awareness throughout the region of State issues affecting service delivery and of major changes. We have developed some very strong relationships with government departments and our local members of Parliament. The profile of Macarthur is being increased—we are seeing that more and more when we come into the city—with State peaks. We have developed a very strong approach to addressing social and regional issues. We are beginning to increase the strength and capacity of the smaller non-government organisations through training and support. So we have seen some changes over the past 12 months.

The longer-term objective is to continue to enhance the community services sector through effective leadership and community involvement and a commitment to addressing local needs using social justice principles. We aim also to have a co-ordinated, collaborative approach to service provision and to provide adequate, affordable and professional development and support so that services are capable of working to their full capacity and meeting clients' needs. Another aim is to reduce duplication and gaps within services and to ensure that services are more equitable and accessible to clients, increasing clients' capacities to compete.

We also aim to see government departments work more collaboratively with each other and community service partners to provide essential services. We aim to work with government departments to ensure adequate funding is provided, especially in high-needs areas. I think that adequately covers our role.

**CHAIR:** How are you funded?

**Ms McIVOR:** We are funded by a number of government departments. Our core funding is through the Department of Community Services, although traditionally it was through different agencies. We have area assistance, which used to be under that Department of Planning and Infrastructure. We have DEWR funding—Department of Workplace Relations—Federal funding, so it is bits and pieces all over the place, which is fairly common in our type of organisations.

**CHAIR:** And do you have to keep putting in submissions to get that?

**Ms McIVOR:** Yes.

**CHAIR:** A lot of what you have said overlaps with our question 2 about co-ordination or a lack of it. You said one of your aims was to reduce duplication and gaps, and to get government agencies to work together more collaboratively. You said that you deal with 150 agencies and your email list is 400.

**Ms McIVOR:** Yes.

**CHAIR:** That almost sounds like a recipe for a lack of co-ordination. It is a lot of agencies to co-ordinate?

**Ms McIVOR:** Yes, and the issue, which you identified, is that government departments are not working collaboratively together, which means that we have lots of small agencies appearing all over the place doing lots of different roles because funding comes from either the State or the Federal level in lots of little pockets. There is no structure that feeds that funding down. Traditionally we have lots of small agencies, some with top annual turnovers as low as \$60,000 or \$70,000. There are a lot of issues around the way that the industry has been developed over the years and we are living with that.

**CHAIR:** And to make that more complicated, some of them come and go because funding is short term and special-purpose and does not necessarily continue?

**Ms McIVOR:** Absolutely.

**CHAIR:** Would you say that there is an overall lack of co-ordination? It is a relative question: Is the Macarthur area particularly suffering from a lack of co-ordination or is it a major problem in the area?

**Ms McIVOR:** Will I get the chance to talk specifically about Macquarie Fields, because that is a different question?

**CHAIR:** Yes, at any stage if you want to draw a distinction between Macquarie Fields and Macarthur, please do so.

**Ms McIVOR:** When we are talking about co-ordination, it happens at two levels. When you talk about services and workers going out there to co-ordinate and network with other services, I think

they do the best job that they could and I do not think they could do any more with the resources that they have. When you talk about how funding is structured, as we have discussed, there is a great deal of fragmentation in the way that is distributed, which means that workers on the ground often are not working collaboratively or in a co-ordinated fashion because they cannot keep up with what is happening around them and deal with their own clients.

We are facing, certainly not just in the Macarthur area but statewide, a fragmentation of our service delivery, because it is very difficult to know where gaps and duplication are and when you map it, it becomes almost immediately out of date. It is very difficult to keep on top of that. Would you like me to go on to Macquarie Fields because I think Macquarie Fields is quite significant in some of the things that happened?

**CHAIR:** Yes.

**Ms McIVOR:** When you talk about co-ordination, I think great moves have been made in Macquarie Fields around co-ordination. As I mentioned when I started, I did some work in Macquarie Fields around 2000 or just before and at that stage it was incredibly fragmented, probably one of our worst suburbs. Now when I look at the suburb, certainly in the last four or five years great moves have been made to try to draw that co-ordination together by the workers on the ground.

I would like to also differentiate between before the disturbances and after, because I think more resources have been put into the area since and so it has changed. Before the riots there were two main groups that were actually co-ordinating services. One of them was the Neighbourhood Advisory Board [NAB], which has since been renamed the Northern Campbelltown Community Action Group. That has been running—I could not get an exact date, but I could track it back at least eight years so it has been running some time and that is run and supported by the Department of Housing. It is a network of local residents and agencies. Their purpose is to make sure there is active community participation in issues and services within the area.

There is also the Macquarie Fields-Ingleburn-Glenfield Interagency, which has been operating about three years. When I did my research, because I wanted to make sure I was representing the region and not just our organisation, it was reported as being a very strong, active and very cohesive group. It is made up of government and non-government organisations and invited residents. Its purpose is to have a co-ordinated approach to providing services and activities within the area. Before the riots the Macquarie Fields-Ingleburn Interagency subgroup was also looking at the whole co-ordination issue by looking at localities planning and mapping, but that was put on hold due to the disturbances and has not resumed as yet. Since the riots there has been a lot of activity in Macquarie Fields, as you can imagine.

One of the big things since the disturbance is the Macquarie Fields Government and Community Action Plan. It was based on the Macquarie Fields Ingleburn and Glenquarie Interagency's previous work so it did not just start from the beginning, the work that was done previously certainly fed into that work. It was originally driven by Craig Knowles when he was in his position. He drew together key workers—Campbelltown council and the Premier's Department—to develop a plan using community consultation.

I will say it has been a frustratingly slow process considering the difficulties of that local area at that time. It has taken nine months before any outcomes have come through the Premier's Department so things are starting to move now but we were quite disappointed it took nine months. The plan aims to co-ordinate services through the collaborative approach between government, non-government organisations, business and residents. The areas that they are addressing through this plan is employment and training, integrated planning and action, infrastructure for community members, policing and case management, young people, families and children, and safer communities.

The plan is being overseen by a local reference group and is made up of six State Government agencies, two Federal Government agencies, six non-government agencies, six residents, two council members and one State and one Federal member of Parliament. They do report into the more central government project management group but there is still concern around that plan because there does not seem to be any concrete funding committed to that plan. They have a plan and a group but with no concrete funding to work on.

A couple of other things that have happened since the riots: The community cottage was set up as a response to the community's need for a resident meeting space. This was a joint project between the Department of Housing and Campbelltown council and other services. They based it on a model that was developed in Glebe. It is around a community-run centre that they have space to meet and to organise their activities. An employment task force has been set up which is a network of government and non-government, job network providers, education, business and residents. They aim to improve training and employment opportunities for local residents.

When you say "Is there co-ordination?" Yes, now there is a lot more than there was prior to the disturbances but there is a couple of comments I would like to make about the co-ordination. First, the limited resources that the agencies receive on the ground has huge impacts on their ability to co-ordinate their services. Agencies are often not able to network and co-ordinate their services because they only have enough money to do the absolute bare essentials and often do not meet client needs with that money. A lot of agencies in the area including the Fields Neighbourhood Centre which was Glenquarie Neighbourhood Centre and the Macquarie Fields Youth Centre, which is something that we are interested in with the riots being predominantly around young people, are paid under the Community Support Grants Program [CSGP] and that has not had an increase since 1989.

As you can imagine there have been great increases in other factors, such as insurance, rents and a whole lot of other things. Basically I know from being on the board of Campbelltown Youth Services that Macquarie Fields Youth Centre has to fundraise for its core services. It has no money for programs at all; it only has money for staff and that is on a part-time basis. Another issue is the short-term non-recurrent funding. Even if we do get funding it is extremely difficult, if not impossible, to get recurrent funding at the moment. That means it is difficult to map services, build the capacity of services and there is regular ongoing availability of services and, like I mentioned, the lack of co-ordination between certainly State government departments but particularly between State and Federal departments so there is no consistency in that funding and it prevents those sustainable changes. For example, I have heard that the Schools as Community Centres has been defunded. That program has run for 8 to 10 years. A person sitting at the back works for PrimaryConnect.

**CHAIR:** Earlier the Department of Education and Training mentioned the Schools as Community Centres.

**Ms McIVOR:** Yes, it has been so successful in the local area and has been held up as an example of how things can work. They have looked at it and said "We have got rid of this entire program across the State" and have not taken into consideration local successes and needs.

**CHAIR:** We will follow up on that because the department representatives talked about it before lunch.

**The Hon. Dr ARTHUR CHESTERFIELD-EVANS:** Who funds you?

**CHAIR:** The Department of Community Services mostly.

**Ms McIVOR:** Yes, mostly. We have a number of different funding grants, which is fairly usual with small organisations, but the majority of ours are now under DOCS because a lot of the funding programs went under the Communities Division recently.

**The Hon. Dr ARTHUR CHESTERFIELD-EVANS:** Are you a permanent public servant or are you also getting funding on three-year blocks, or whatever?

**Ms McIVOR:** I am the only one in our organisation of seven staff that has recurrent funding so a lot of my work is constantly trying to get funding for my other projects to keep the organisation going.

**The Hon. Dr ARTHUR CHESTERFIELD-EVANS:** We asked an earlier witness who should look after Macquarie Fields and he said the neighbourhood centre should be the peak body for that area. Presumably you are further away than that and have a larger territory?

**Ms McIVOR:** Yes, I am.

**The Hon. Dr ARTHUR CHESTERFIELD-EVANS:** Who should be the peak body? Who keeps track of all these little groups? If they all email each other it does not necessarily mean they know what is going on, does it?

**Ms McIVOR:** Which is one of the reasons why we, as a peak body, are that focal point for a lot of regional information, which obviously affects local areas. I do not know that I would feel comfortable commenting on which particular organisation is the best to take that role within, but I do think it is really helpful to have some co-ordinating factor within the areas. When I worked in Minto my role was in community development and we ran a thing called Minto Healthy Communities which was a co-ordinating group. It meant that all projects and services went through there. Without that type of co-ordination it is almost impossible.

**The Hon. Dr ARTHUR CHESTERFIELD-EVANS:** Do you say you have 400 on your database and you do a lot of co-ordinating?

**Ms McIVOR:** No, I was talking about my previous work as an example.

**The Hon. Dr ARTHUR CHESTERFIELD-EVANS:** Earlier you said you had 400 on your mailing list and you believed there should be more co-ordination. I say if someone said they want to have co-ordinated services at Macquarie Fields, do you say you would not venture an opinion who might be the co-ordinator?

**Ms McIVOR:** The only reason I am not comfortable at making that comment is because there could be possibly two or three of those agencies who could play that role of co-ordinating that.

**CHAIR:** It is not fair to ask you to make a choice?

**Ms McIVOR:** That is right. The neighbourhood centre would certainly be one of those but I am not willing to make a comment against the other two or three that could possibly also do that role?

**The Hon. Dr ARTHUR CHESTERFIELD-EVANS:** Who are the three possibilities?

**Ms McIVOR:** Is this relevant?

**CHAIR:** It is not fair to ask her.

**The Hon. Dr ARTHUR CHESTERFIELD-EVANS:** If the Committee has been told there is a problem with co-ordination—it does not know the internal politics—at some point some person has to make a decision and fund it, is that right?

**Ms McIVOR:** Absolutely.

**CHAIR:** Jane is not a public servant. It is not fair to ask her to essentially make a choice amongst groups as to whom she would prefer.

**Ms McIVOR:** The way that I would see it working most effectively is that the Macquarie Fields Ingleburn Interagency would actually select one of the organisations as a collective to decide who would run it because if you actually just descend and say "This person should be co-ordinating this area" then it would have no ownership from the local area. I would disagree that I could make that decision. I also believe that places like, even the neighbourhood centre would be one, that all of them have very limited resources which means that they would need some level of resource to actually do this co-ordination. They could not do it on the level of funding they have at the moment. I believe that the neighbourhood centre has about \$70,000 per annum to run for the entire area. So it is not possible for them. I am not willing to make that decision where there are no resources and nothing to support that centre.

**The Hon. Dr ARTHUR CHESTERFIELD-EVANS:** So the model would be something like the local groups that had a stake would indicate who they thought was best fitted for the job—

**Ms McIVOR:** Yes.

**The Hon. Dr ARTHUR CHESTERFIELD-EVANS:** —and the Government would give a commitment that who was selected would get sufficient resources—

**Ms McIVOR:** Yes, absolutely.

**The Hon. Dr ARTHUR CHESTERFIELD-EVANS:** —and for a reasonably long time frame to commit to that, and that would be the model down the path we should proceed.

**Ms McIVOR:** Yes, absolutely.

**The Hon. Dr ARTHUR CHESTERFIELD-EVANS:** You have said there are a lot of small agencies with a lack of co-ordination and duplication sometimes. Is that because they are all going to a central body with submissions for money and then they are allocated with perhaps not clear defined roles because of their variety?

**Ms McIVOR:** No. What actually happens is that different funding streams come out, sometimes from the same department, sometimes from different departments. But very rarely do the departments discuss between each other who is sending out the different funding rounds. So what can happen is, say—to use the neighbourhood centre as an example again—the neighbourhood centre could apply for funding for, I don't know, a play group from one government department and then Northcott could go to another government department and apply for another play group, but from a different government department, and the two government departments do not communicate. So then we on the ground have to work out who is doing what, and sometimes it is very difficult to work that out.

**The Hon. Dr ARTHUR CHESTERFIELD-EVANS:** This grants system is fairly recent, is it not? I mean, when Adam was a boy how were all these things funded, were they funded, were they all done by a government department, were they all voluntary or did they exist? We seem to have this model with everyone going for funding from different departments on this sort of three-year model. How did it work before? What are the alternatives?

**Ms McIVOR:** This method of funding has happened over a long period of time. The CSGP has not been increased since 1989, and that program started some years before that. When it first started it was not such a problem because there was not such fragmentation but as the years have progressed and it has continued with government just throwing different pockets of money at it at all different times. The only way we know that there is funding is through local papers and checking on the Internet. We never know where there is big streams unless it is a huge one like early intervention. Apart from that it is very difficult. You have to run from pillar to post to find out what funding is coming out. One of our roles is to notify the region about when funding is coming out.

It has been a progressive thing over the years, and it has got increasingly more difficult because the Federal Government has now begun to direct fund and without any competitive tendering process, which means that we have no idea where that money goes because we do not even see a submission. I believe we should be working as a region to look at, because we have large networks that we work together, we meet together, that we together should be able to say, "This is the pocket of money. This is what we all do. Where are the gaps? Let's fill them." But that does not happen. There is a strong competitive tendering process which we have to use, and we have no choice.

**The Hon. Dr ARTHUR CHESTERFIELD-EVANS:** Do you think it would be better if the money from Federal and State was negotiated for a region perhaps at a national level based on your demographics or problems to help the welfare of somebody, and then you said, "Well, Macarthur region will get X dollars from State and X dollars from Federal and now we will have a tender process within ourselves for who gets the money"?

**Ms McIVOR:** Yes because we have the knowledge of our local regions. For example, the recent early intervention from DOCS went at a State level, which means that they have very little knowledge of those local networks, what services already exist, where there are duplications, and they

are making decisions on submissions from a distance, which means that they have very limited knowledge of those networks.

**The Hon. Dr ARTHUR CHESTERFIELD-EVANS:** You do not think there would be a lot of nepotism in a system where the local—

**Ms McIVOR:** Only if you used an independent body. It would be very important that the person who ran that type of process was not applying for that funding.

**The Hon. IAN WEST:** What do you see as the causes and problems that contributed to the actual disturbances?

**Ms McIVOR:** One of the things I would like to start with before I go into that is that I, after working in the region for a long time, believe that Macquarie Fields was just almost an unfortunate situation that could have occurred on any of our four or five housing estates. So when we talk about this I am very reluctant to say that Macquarie Fields is the only suburb struggling with this. I guess it is very difficult when we see all the funding now being put into one area, knowing that there are four or five other suburbs that could explode at any stage. That is just something that I would like to raise here.

One of the things is around frustration. With the estates, you see a lot of residents who believe they have very limited opportunities and respect from the wider community. A lot of the estates—certainly the ones at Macquarie Fields and Minto—run along the railway line. They were promised great things; they were promised industry along the railway line and strong infrastructure, and what they got was nothing like that. They have had no vehicle to have a voice. It is like they were there and they had no vehicle. I believe it is because they use a lot of the Federal Government systems, such as Centrelink. They use the State system of Department of Housing. I feel that often they feel very downtrodden by that because it takes away their element of choice. When they are downtrodden, with their lack of self-esteem—it is very difficult for them to see when they are not encouraged to move forward but actually criticised and beaten down—it is very hard for them to see how they can get out of their situation. So their own frustration within that situation.

Like we mentioned, I think also because there are so many complex needs within an area like Macquarie Fields, with short-term project funding it can again inflame issues for local residents, because they do not have anything to hold on to. They have nobody to trust. They have nowhere that they can develop relationships, which means that they are dependent on their own resources in many cases, because they do not have the ongoing resources in their local area. Another issue that is occurring to quite a high level at the moment is that there is no general public housing stock going out, certainly in our area. The only people who are being housed at the moment are priority housing, which means they have very high complex needs. So you imagine if you are in an area like that, the only people who are coming in are high complex needs, so we have a high concentration where that was never meant to be in a public housing estate. There was meant to be diversity within there, and there is not. Something like 90 per cent to 95 per cent of people are on benefits. That was never meant to be the case within public housing.

Also, there is a lot of frustration because a lot of the things that are happening within Government—I am not sure that I want to comment under this but it is around some of the reforms that have changed in the past—are making it even more difficult for people to get ahead. You see very high rent rises, and the amount of benefit that they receive does not go a long way to meet their basic needs, and they watch from afar as we have a fairly affluent society now increasing. So all those things are very frustrating within those areas. One of the last things, and probably one of the biggest reasons why the disturbances at that particular moment occurred—I am not saying generally—was that there was certainly at that stage an increase in drug raids around the local area over that period.

I am not saying we do not need to do drug raids. We do. But if they were done with a more planned community approach, services could be there to deal with things like addiction and family issues, and the crises that come from those. There was evidence, as local workers mentioned, of an increase in people coming for crisis intervention just before the riots. It seemed to match the time when they were doing all these raids. These people, whether rightly or wrongly, depend on their drugs to survive in their life, and if you take away those drugs there has to be something to support them to



the next stage. You cannot just expect them to say everything is all right. So, if we are doing big raids like that, there needs to be a whole of community approach, not just a police attack on the drug issues. Those are some of the things that I think would have caused those disturbances. There was a lot of frustration within those areas, and an extremely high level of mistrust, so that even if government and non-government agencies are there trying their best to help, you have to build up rapport because they have been burnt so many times in the past that there must be a level of trust before they can work with people.

**CHAIR:** So, to some extent, the fact that there was a disturbance at Macquarie Fields was an accident; it could have been at a different time at a different estate?

**Ms McIVOR:** Absolutely.

**CHAIR:** Because the reasons are rather similar across the estates.

**Ms McIVOR:** Yes.

**CHAIR:** Not only in the Macarthur area, but in other areas as well.

**Ms McIVOR:** Absolutely.

**The Hon. IAN WEST:** Once that complex list of issues ignited, was there additional fuel added to the fire from say the press?

**Ms McIVOR:** Yes. That is another question. Do you want me to go onto that now?

**The Hon. IAN WEST:** I am sorry, but yes.

**Ms McIVOR:** To be perfectly honest, I am quite disgusted with the media. The media really inflamed an already very volatile situation. I phoned the media, because at the time I had a worker at Macquarie Fields, and so I know the level of media coverage and of the many reports from local residents and workers about things that were happening. They were very disrespectful; they were very intrusive; they hyped up situations that were so sensitive to people already vulnerable and disadvantaged. So they made a story out of something that was dear to someone's heart, and it was quite awful to see that.

They were also quite unethical. A lot of their practices were very unethical. I can name a few examples of that. One was that we had evidence that alcohol was purchased, on camera, by young people, but paid for by the media so that they could get that picture. We also had evidence that they encouraged people around the area to get filming. They encouraged them to get filming so that they could pay large money for that film coverage. Also, they rented a property and set up a camera at a key point in the estates where the disturbances were, and focussed their filming on the majority of it on one family. A lot of people saw that on television. They chose a particularly complex client who had lots of needs and used that coverage as though all the residents in Macquarie Fields were like that. Their depiction of what the people were like came from probably one of our worst examples.

They also refused to listen to people like workers and experts in the field. I personally had an experience with Channel 9. I agreed to work with them originally, but they would not wait for me. They went out and did exactly what I had instructed I preferred that they did not do, and so I refused to work with them any further. So we actually did no work at all with them—because they just went and talked to people that we were not willing to have them talk to, because it was not fair on those residents.

They hindered workers at a very critical time. Like I said, the worker that we had over at Macquarie Fields, on the first day of the riots was inundated with media, and they spent more time trying to deal with the media than they did with the local residents' issues. They refused to talk, but they still were there constantly, trying to get attention. The worst thing is that that media coverage, and negative media coverage, is ongoing. Twelve months later, we still see things on the television and in newspapers; every now and again you will see a flash on the Macquarie Fields riots. That is warping the perspective of outsiders about what the real people of Macquarie Fields are like. It certainly has

increased the very difficult issue of stigma and self-worth that already exists in that estate. They feel shame about what has happened.

**The Hon. IAN WEST:** There would have been quite a deal of reality TV and an attempt to create a program and attract people to be performers in the game.

**Ms McIVOR:** Absolutely—and trying to intervene when mothers were trying to protect their young children, or when young children were being arrested by police; when the mothers were screaming and all they wanted to do was protect their own family ground, the media were right in between them. There was total disregard.

**The Hon. IAN WEST:** The "cameras, lights, action" attracting more of an audience?

**Ms McIVOR:** Absolutely. I will mention somewhere else, but there were certainly people from other suburbs there for the fun, certainly other people getting involved, and the media obviously helped that and actually drew them to that area for that reason.

**CHAIR:** You have mentioned a couple of times that you will "mention somewhere else", so we will have to speed up here. Could you identify for us the things that you want to say more about?

**Ms McIVOR:** Okay.

**CHAIR:** Can you tell us a bit about the relationship between Macquarie Fields residents, particularly the young people, and the local police—what it was like before, and what it has been like since? I suppose, as a broader part of that, you have already said something about how the disturbances affected the residents—obviously, pretty badly.

**Ms McIVOR:** Yes.

**CHAIR:** There have been some steps taken to rebuild.

**Ms McIVOR:** Yes.

**CHAIR:** Have a go at those two.

**Ms McIVOR:** There are certain police roles, such as the police youth liaison officer, that made a great effort in the local community to develop relationships, even before the riots. You can see the difference in the way that those young people relate with those people. But, in general, the feedback I have is that there seems to be limited effort by the police—and I guess people could question whether this is their role—to understand the local community. Some of the things that the police do to do their job are the very sorts of things that are going to inflame people, because they come from such a disadvantaged background, with very limited support, very limited understanding, with people treating them with such disrespect, and their lack of trust, that heavy-handed policing will actually work contrary to benefiting that local community. When you scratch just a little bit under the surface with many of those residents, it does not take a lot to get to work with them. But you have to understand those people.

Also, there are issues when you get local, because NSW Police is such a large bureaucracy that you have issues around local police being limited in their positions by the level of support they get from senior levels. They are in a different place, and so they are not aware of a lot of the local issues, but NSW Police standardises the service across the whole of the State. Sometimes local issues need to be taken into consideration, but they cannot get that through the huge bureaucracies that stand in their way. There are a very high percentage of decent residents within the estate, but often, because it has been such a disadvantaged area, the police will just treat everyone the same. Obviously we have criminals, obviously we have high needs, and obviously we have issues that do need to be dealt with by the police, but they need to assess whether these are the people before they use their heavy-handedness on them. I guess, before the riots, it sat a bit like that. It was a bit of an us-and-them type of situation.

I have seen some changes since the riots. There has been some strong evidence that the police are making more of an effort to build relationships within the local community. They are attending community barbeques and luncheons; they are represented on the Macquarie Fields-Ingleburn-Glenfield Interagency and on other planning forums; there have been reports that they have been trying to get positive media coverage; and there is development of a liaison group for young people.

On the flipside, like I said, I was doing some research for this and one of the workers I spoke to said that only a few weeks ago on the anniversary of the riots they drove past police harassing some 8-year-olds and 9-year-olds by pushing them against the wall and searching them, which I would question as appropriate for that age group. Just because they are in a disadvantaged area that does not mean that—you know, it was a bit of a drama situation at that moment. There were a lot of additional, unnecessary car searches and all sorts of things just at that time, because they were nervous about a flare-up. But the residents have a reported of the way that they dealt with it that they felt very disrespected in that process. In a question you asked to about how it might be improved. I believe, after working on the ground a lot in community development, that police should have improved training to work in these highly disadvantaged areas.

If police had a little training around community development—how to connect with their local community and how to build that capacity—I think it would lead a great deal of difference to the outcomes they get with the local residents. I think also can there could be improved structures and processes, and greater awareness on the part on the high New South Wales police department that there are local issues; that you cannot standardise across a whole state when you have places like Bondi or Cronulla and then places like Macquarie Fields. You cannot standardise the way operations exist because you have such a different mix and so many different backgrounds and baggage in these areas. The way that they deal with it just inflames the situation. They need a level of flexibility in order to be responsive to local needs. As community workers one of our prime responsibilities is to allow ourselves to be responsive to the needs of those local communities. So I would question why a government police department would not also be able to be responsive to local needs.

**CHAIR:** To what extent are the police involved with community forums or interagency groups? Are some other departments much more involved than the police?

**Ms McIVOR:** Yes, definitely. Although most government departments are represented at some level at some of our forums, the only real representation we probably get from the police is from the ethnic community liaison officers [ECLOs] who deal with ethnic issues. But they are not police officers. They worked within the police department, but they are not police officers. It is quite difficult to get any police representation at a regional level.

**CHAIR:** Is that because they do not see their role as being part of the community capacity building, et cetera? Perhaps they see themselves differently?

**Ms McIVOR:** Yes. It is possible that they do not see it as their role. Also, I think that their own demands are extremely high, too. I have to acknowledge that. Certainly in an area such as Campbelltown you will often hear reports that police have taken quite a long time to respond to calls. It is such a huge disadvantaged area. As I said, we have five or six estates in the area, with one police station at Campbelltown and one at Macquarie Fields. It covers quite a large area of disadvantage. I do not know that the community would be particularly happy with pulling police officers off the job to go networking, I think it needs to happen within the department at some level because you cannot really get them out often.

**The Hon. IAN WEST:** Does that mean that the same problems arise when you apply for funding, that you have these problems of how you work out an application for funding for co-ordination networking and all those issues that are not regarded as front line?

**Ms McIVOR:** Yes. That is right.

**The Hon. IAN WEST:** The police have the same problem. When you apply for funding, do you attempt to assess those aspects?

**Ms McIVOR:** It is becoming all critical to assess our networking needs and those types of things because of the changes in the funding structure. We will need to include that in future funding submissions because of the need for that. The probably have is that often with the funding available to be applied for, you still cannot do it, because the budget does not work. There are still some inconsistencies with that.

**CHAIR:** So there is a need for the government bodies, the funding agencies, to recognise that as well as funding a program, they need to give more attention to funding to develop the capacity and the networking?

**Ms McIVOR:** Absolutely, yes.

**CHAIR:** That would be true of both State and federal funding?

**Ms McIVOR:** Yes. Absolutely.

**CHAIR:** As you said, with the Federal Government doing more and more direct funding, it is in one sense increasing the problem because there is more networking to be done.

**Ms McIVOR:** Yes. That is right.

**CHAIR:** And more some missions to write.

**Ms McIVOR:** Yes. It is an ongoing cycle, unfortunately.

**CHAIR:** You have said on two or three occasions that you have other things to say. Do you want to go back a bit and run through the areas that you have put some work into? If some of it is too detailed, you could take it on notice sent provided to the Committee in writing.

**Ms McIVOR:** I am just checking my notes. I think we have probably talked a lot about the challengers, because a lot of it is around funding and around resources, and significant gaps in services and those types of things. I think we have probably covered most of those things during the questions.

**CHAIR:** I think that is why we missed out question number three, because you had been talking about the challenges prior to that.

**Ms McIVOR:** The effects on the residents, I think we have probably covered that to some level.

**CHAIR:** The effect of the disturbances?

**Ms McIVOR:** Yes.

**CHAIR:** Not really. We certainly have not talked about the rebuilding process. A number of people have said that some good came out of this because of the focus on developing the plan, but that might not be a reasonable thing to say.

**Ms McIVOR:** I would not mind making a couple of comments on that. Misrepresentation is the major one, I think. We have generalised treatment of a community when it only involved a very small group of people. They have that strong sense of shame. We have had reports from mothers of children they have applied for jobs and have been refused jobs because they come from that region. Job prospects have been affected. Obviously the stigma is compounded on a long-term basis, their self-worth that we have talked about already.

Some children are nervous and afraid to go to school, particularly if they go to school in different area is, other than Macquarie Fields, because they have been branded. I can name a couple of families that I have spoken to recently that were very traumatised and frightened—children in particular, traumatised and frightened by the events—not just the events of the riot. They were more afraid of some of the stuff that happened around the police intervention. There were choppers within a

metre of their houses. The noise was incredible and the lights were blinding. Night after night these kids were having these choppers overhead, with no understanding or explanation. That traumatised them.

Some of the children have become quite afraid of the police because they were there with their riot gear, which was quite different. Perhaps they could not make another response, but some understanding or discussion or efforts to try to discuss this with the community at the time it was happening would have been really helpful. It was a very divided situation at the time of the disturbances. It was community and police, and a lot of the children were quite disturbed by that. One of the things that really struck me is the sense of strength of the local community. They hate the stigma, and they hate the shame, but they are so determined to fight their misrepresentation themselves—the local community, the disadvantaged people. They are making every effort to publicly say that they are okay.

That is something that really touched me, the fact that they are not just relying on other people; they are actually trying to do that themselves. Most of the other things to rebuild have been around the things I said in my introduction, the task forces, the colleges and the plan. There are a lot more resources coming into the local area because of the attention. I question whether we should be doing the same thing in all the estates and not just the one that had a problem.

**CHAIR:** What would you like to see come out of the inquiry?

**Ms McIVOR:** I would like to see adequate long-term funding relevant to high-need areas, especially new services in that particular area because it is one of our highest youth populations. We have a centre that has \$60,000 a year, and I do not think that is adequate. If people seriously are saying that they want to meet the needs of disadvantaged people then that certainly is not adequate. I would like to see a more equitable collaborative approach to the whole funding of services within the local area, that it is not so fragmented coming down, that there is a lot more discussion between government departments. I would like to see other high-need areas within the Campbelltown region considered as part of this inquiry. I would hate to think that we are looking at Macquarie Fields just because the riots happened there, because I think they could happen on any other estate any time. Mental health is one of our biggest issues in the local area. I know they have just announced that they are going to put some or money into mental health, so let us hope it gets to—

**The Hon. ROBYN PARKER:** That is the Federal Government.

**Ms McIVOR:** Yes, Federal Government, but let us hope it gets to the people who are in high-needs areas because they deinstitutionalised mental health with no follow up of community care, which means that people cannot survive. They have no support. They do not have that level of support. Some of the things around the police training that I have discussed, I would like to see that looked into, how they work with their local community.

**CHAIR:** When we did our Redfern inquiry we heard quite a lot about the cultural awareness training program that was introduced and made mandatory for all police from then on appointed to Redfern. What you are talking about could be almost a similar sort of thing. If you go into a place with particular kinds of issues, just as in a highly Aboriginal area you need some cultural awareness, then you need cultural awareness of a different sort in some of the housing estates.

**Ms McIVOR:** Absolutely, and I know from my experience in community development that one estate is never the same as another, even though it is in the same local area. When I was working in Minto, yes, they have the same type of issues, but they develop in different ways just by the nature of who is in them. I worked in Minto, but I could not move anything I have worked with in Minto straight across to Macquarie Fields. I had to work individually with both resident areas because they have to see that you are listening to them and that you are working with them and not just saying, "This is how it works." I think the last thing I would like, but I cannot give you an answer as to how I would like this to happen because I do not know what is possible, is some way to address the way the media coverage of such events could be done. I know that we have fairly strict laws around media coverage, but to have such an incredibly detrimental effect on disadvantaged people, I would like to see something become of that. I know that it is very difficult.

**CHAIR:** We asked the Media Council to come today, but they were not keen to do so. One of the comments they made was that they had not had any specific examples drawn to their attention.

**Ms McIVOR:** I am sure that is not true.

**CHAIR:** It may well be that communities, politicians and so on need to think about there not being much point in complaining about it afterwards, because that was the comment that we got. We had thought it would be worth talking to them about the media coverage.

**Ms McIVOR:** It is very difficult. My conversation with the guy from Channel 9 when I was originally willing to talk to him, I explained exactly the issues that we had over the previous week and he said to me that he would not do that. He went straight ahead and did what I said was not appropriate. I refused to work with him. He was perfectly aware of issues because I can vouch that I spoke to him and we had quite a lengthy discussion about the issues and what had occurred. I find that very difficult to believe.

**CHAIR:** As a Committee we are certainly aware of that, and that is why we invited them to come today. That is something we can take up. Thank you very much for coming and for doing so much work to prepare and talking to the people on the ground. We very much appreciate the amount of effort you put into it. I do not think there is anything we have to follow up with you specifically, but if we think of something I hope that we can contact you.

**Ms McIVOR:** Absolutely. That is no problem at all. Good luck with your inquiry.

**(The witness withdrew)**

**JANET ANN WATSON**, Facilitator, Schools as Community Centres Program, Macquarie Fields,

**PATRICIA FOGARTY**, Co-ordinator, Glenquarie Neighbourhood Centre—the Junction Works, Glenquarie, both affirmed and examined:

**CHAIR:** Who do you represent?

**Ms WATSON:** I am a member of the Macquarie Fields Ingleburn and Glenfield Interagency, but I am the Schools As Community Centres facilitator, based at Curran Public School. I have worked in Macquarie Fields for the past 11 years.

**CHAIR:** It is the Fields Neighbourhood Centre, which was Glenquarie, and it is now the Macquarie Fields Ingleburn Glenfield Interagency Group. You will have to forgive us if we stray into older titles because we have previously heard from people using the older titles. Did you want to make a statement before going to questions?

**Ms WATSON:** First of all, we would like to thank you for the opportunity to come here today. We would like to open by saying that the Macquarie Fields community is a wonderful community. It is a strong community. Having been there for 11 even years, it is a privilege to work with that community. Through the interagency groups we represent, we work with other members of the community on a large range of projects. These partnerships have been occurring for many years, though not just a something that has happened since the public disturbances. It is a very proactive and committed community who are working very strongly to strengthen their community and to make it an environment that they wish to bring their children up in, to stay and live happy and fruitful lives. The other point that we would like to mention as well that is underlying a lot of what we will talk about, I am sure it has been mentioned by many people already, is that we are dealing with intergenerational issues on the estate.

It is not just with regard to employment, we are looking at intergenerational issues around drug and alcohol, for attendance at school, low literacy rates, low numeracy rates and domestic violence. You have a broader range of issues that are intergenerational and not just focused around employment or at benefiting from social welfare agencies. The other key point with Macquarie Fields is that it is a transient population. It is an artificial community. People do not live there by choice: They are placed there by a government department. It does not have the characteristics that ordinary communities or neighbourhoods have. One of the most significant factors, as I mentioned before, is that we have families who will be there for six months, some families will be there for five months, some for two years and some for three years. There is a constant changeover of families and individuals coming in and out of the community. I think those issues have an enormous impact on community life within Macquarie Fields.

**CHAIR:** Did you want to say anything before we start with the questions?

**Ms FOGARTY:** No. Ms Watson summed it up very well.

**Ms WATSON:** Would you like us to go in order? Are there particular questions? I am aware of your time and it is the end of a very long day for you.

**CHAIR:** No. We will start with the questions. Sometimes Committee members hop in. Sometimes the best meeting we have are where we follow something that suddenly strikes us. Tell us about the interagency group—who it is, what it does, its objects.

**Ms WATSON:** The Macarthur—it is really the Macquarie Fields, Ingleburn, Glenfield—group began about 10 years ago in Macquarie Fields. When my program was placed there 11 years ago one of its chief objectives was to promote interagency collaboration and the development of partnerships between agencies and particularly the schools. What you see today in the MIG is actually mark III: this is the third re-badging and rebirthing of the interagency group. We currently have a core group of perhaps 11 members. The most committed and active members would be Primary Connect, the Fields Neighbourhood Centre, the Department of Housing, Burnside, the Benevolent Society, St Vincent de Paul, Work Ventures and Campbelltown council, when it has the resources to send

someone to the meetings. They would be our core members. Our mailing list and people who come in on a regular basis would number around 25 to 30 agencies. We meet monthly. Residents do not form a part of the interagency. It is a group that comprises NGOs and the government service providers. I suppose it is not surprising that the most pro-active members of the group are those who are based and working in Macquarie Fields, because I suppose it is our core business and it is what we do day by day. It is our target group. The public housing estate is where we are focusing, except for agencies such as the Fields Neighbourhood Centre. It also takes in Glenfield and Ingleburn. But the majority of the key members are focusing on the Macquarie Fields public housing estate.

**Ms FOGARTY:** We support each other because we are on the ground and fairly isolated. It is a long way from the centre of Campbelltown. So in lots of ways, because we are fairly isolated workers, we support each other.

**Ms WATSON:** The main purpose of the interagency was to promote positive partnerships and to facilitate integrated planning within the Macquarie Fields area. The interagency has had its stops and starts over the last 10 years but in the last three years—the new MIG—it has grown consistently stronger and with better planning processes in place. Prior to the public disturbances we were in the midst of doing a mapping process of services and programs available to the community, and also identifying gaps and duplications within the service provision. This was going on one and a half years before the public disturbances began. That is the key role of the interagency group, around that idea of integrated planning and better partnerships. We also provide a range of community development activities that we do together—harmony day barbecues, community lunches, community expos, fun days, forums, the Women's Festival, the Young Women's Festival—

**CHAIR:** You are missing the Women's Festival to come here today, are you?

**Ms WATSON:** It is the Young Women's Festival that is happening today. I have heard on the phone that it is a raving success.

**CHAIR:** Thank you for coming here instead. If we had known it conflicted we would have looked for another day.

**Ms WATSON:** This is also important.

**The Hon. ROBYN PARKER:** We would have come out there if we had known about it.

**Ms WATSON:** There are some great activities. They are doing some really wonderful things today. One aspect of the interagency that I have been aware of in the last 10 years is that its success often is very dependent on the personalities who are involved in the provision of services. If there is the ability to develop a positive working relationship with your neighbour agency that promotes good health and positive outcomes within the interagency itself. Also, if organisations look favourably toward giving staff time to attend an interagency and to see that as being an important part of their work that also has an enormous effect. When the interagency has failed or imploded on itself in the past it has often been due to lack of resources so that a single worker cannot leave their core business to attend an interagency meeting, or an organisation does not feel that is the appropriate or best way to spend time. As I said, the personal attitude or work practice of individual workers is important if they see building partnerships as an important part of their role or beneficial to their client base.

Over the last 10 years the entity at Macquarie Fields has had its peaks and its troughs but in the last three years it is definitely in a peak. You would be aware that with funding contracts and agreements now often there is a stipulation that to maintain your funding and for your evaluation processes you must nominate and identify partnerships and networks that you have contributed to or that you are involved in. When I started 11 years ago my program used to have the tag of "interagency" added to it. It was the schools as community centres interagency program. "Interagency" was a new word. The expression "whole of government" did not exist back then. It was very much agencies working in the silo mentality. But we have come a long way to where we are today where agencies have that as part of their funding agreements, that they must develop partnerships and identify them.



**CHAIR:** We have been told that the exercise you were involved in of mapping, identifying duplications and gaps and all the rest of it has fed into and been picked up by the Government plan and so on. So that 2005-06 plan has to some extent built on the work that you people were doing.

**Ms FOGARTY:** Part of that is true but there was also a consultation process last year that the Premier's Department held. Community members attended that. They also have input into that. I do not even know whether "input" is the right word because they took that information away and a plan was brought to us as it is. And it has been modified, I believe, a couple of times.

**Ms WATSON:** So many times that it is not funny. I sit on the local reference group and also the purchase committee with Col Gellatly as well. There have been numerous versions of the action plan. A lot of it was based on what the MIG had been doing recently but in the 10 or 11 years that I have been there there have been 18 to 20 consultations. People come in and do research programs, consult with the community and say that they will do a paper and have recommendations. Then there is nothing. I have a drawer full of statistics and information from key informant interviews and survey groups that people have done, that departments have done, that NGOs have done over the years. They have sat there. It is not surprising that the same issues present year after year after year for the community. When I was approached by Craig Knowles, our previous local member, to provide information about local services and gaps and issues for the community I could basically have been reading a document that I could have put together back in 1995 when I did the first consultation when I came to Macquarie Fields, because every single one of those issues 11 years later remained for that community.

**CHAIR:** Did you feel like giving up and going away?

**Ms WATSON:** If the community was not so fabulous, if the kids were not just so extraordinary, yes, but they keep you there because they are outstanding. A lot of the information that made its way into the action plan came from many, many years previously, not just in the last year or two years—a long time in the coming.

**CHAIR:** Other members can ask questions, but some of what you are saying obviously leads straight into the second question. You would have heard what we were talking about earlier, too—some of it with Jane about co-ordination or the lack of it. Since the interagency is right at the heart of attempts to get co-ordination—

**Ms FOGARTY:** We actually disagreed with that statement because through the MIG, we felt that we had sufficient improvement in co-ordination of programs provided by locally based agencies and the level of the interagency communication. Co-ordination and development of partnerships within the government sectors could be improved, though.

**CHAIR:** But you think the NGOs—

**Ms FOGARTY:** Certainly the ones on the ground, yes.

**CHAIR:**—are co-operating in co-ordinating well.

**Ms FOGARTY:** Yes. As I said, for those reasons that we stated before, it is because we are fairly isolated workers. It is a mammoth task and it is important to form partnerships. For instance, the Primary Connect and the Schools As Community Centres Program [SaCC] are based right on the estate, and I have the three areas to cover. By my forming partnerships and covering part of the estate, it frees me up to go into Glenfield that has no services whatsoever there, or even into Ingleburn. So that is why it is important that not only do I make those partnerships, but that is how we support each other as well. Again, the SaCC program and the Primary Connect Program are on the estates. They have their own workers as well, so there are times when they need my input as well.

**CHAIR:** So in some ways the partnership and co-ordination at Macquarie Fields might actually be better than some of the other estates in the Macarthur area.

**Ms FOGARTY:** Certainly with us on the ground, yes.

**Ms WATSON:** And I think the other thing that it is important to remember is that co-ordination and working within the community and developing a community happens on all sorts of different levels. You have what happens at the grassroots level and then you have, at your local government level, your localities plan, and then you have planning and co-ordination that is supposedly happening at a State level and also on a Federal level. So you have different tiers of co-ordination and integration of service planning. It is very, very complex.

I think that one of the experiences that we had as an agent, or with MIG as a group, in the last sort of year or so is that it takes time to actively develop plans that makes sense with the right sort of outcomes and also to do the consultations. If you are a single worker in a small agency and you are already juggling 15 or 20 hats, to have the actual time and resources available to you to go through the planning and co-ordination process is often quite difficult. This is why, when Premier's made the offer of attaching a project officer to the process of co-ordinating and planning, it was welcomed with open arms because it is basically a full-time job in order to produce the outcomes that you want.

But even with the action plan that was developed with the project committee, that was restricted to actions and strategies with government departments. That action plan does not incorporate strategies and outcomes of NGOs. That is an even more complex issue in terms of government based/government agency outcomes and strategies versus complementing and not duplicating what is happening with an NGO. So as part of that process that is occurring, we still have not drawn in and incorporated the NGO strategies and planning processes. It is an incredibly complex minefield.

**CHAIR:** Yes, it is.

**Ms WATSON:** And you need to direct a lot of resources to do it effectively.

**CHAIR:** Arthur, did you want to ask a question, or shall we continue on?

**The Hon. Dr ARTHUR CHESTERFIELD-EVANS:** Do you actually run what was called the neighbourhood centre there?

**Ms WATSON:** Trisha runs at the neighbourhood centre.

**Ms FOGARTY:** I am the co-ordinator at the neighbourhood centre.

**Ms WATSON:** And I run the Schools As Community Centres Program on the estate.

**CHAIR:** At Curran?

**Ms WATSON:** At the Curran Public School.

**The Hon. Dr ARTHUR CHESTERFIELD-EVANS:** So you are not geographically in the same place?

**Ms WATSON:** No.

**Ms FOGARTY:** We are about five minutes away. There is a road separating the estate. I am just behind the shopping centre, so it is quite removed from the estate, even though it is only five minutes away.

**Ms WATSON:** And I am in the centre of the public housing estate.

**CHAIR:** When we had our hearings there, we had a bit of a walk and a look around, so we know roughly where you mean.

**The Hon. Dr ARTHUR CHESTERFIELD-EVANS:** How many different groups are in your centre?

**Ms FOGARTY:** Do you mean programs that I run? I am not too sure about the question.

**The Hon. Dr ARTHUR CHESTERFIELD-EVANS:** What is the definition of a group?

**Ms FOGARTY:** I have various programs there. The funding that I receive is actually a bit less than was stated here. It is around \$59,000-\$60,000 and that basically just includes me, and I have a tiny bit of programs money left over after that. I have community groups that use the centre and I also run programs from there and I also do outreach programs on the estate and at Glenfield at the moment.

**The Hon. Dr ARTHUR CHESTERFIELD-EVANS:** So you are a kind of a one-person band in that centre?

**Ms FOGARTY:** Yes.

**The Hon. Dr ARTHUR CHESTERFIELD-EVANS:** And you lease space to them, or is it provided free?

**Ms FOGARTY:** I actually pay rent. There is a hall committee that looks after the hall, and I actually had to pay rent for the office space and if I want to use the hall. One of the things I do—if a community group or even Jan wanted to run something of the neighbourhood centre, I would do it in my time that I pay for, and then I would give that to them free because it is a community thing. But we actually pay rent.

**The Hon. Dr ARTHUR CHESTERFIELD-EVANS:** Who owns the centre?

**Ms FOGARTY:** The centre is owned by council, but it is actually managed by community groups.

**The Hon. Dr ARTHUR CHESTERFIELD-EVANS:** Right. Of the other groups we have seen today, there have been a number: Work Ventures came in here, Mission Australia Employment, the Department of Health, the Department of Education and Training, and I presume that DOCS is buzzing around somewhere.

**Ms FOGARTY:** Yes.

**The Hon. Dr ARTHUR CHESTERFIELD-EVANS:** When you say that you co-ordinate, and the school runs some after-hours activities, presumably each of these has different programs? They get their funding from a number of different programs and they fundraise.

**Ms FOGARTY:** My money is solely from DOCS. I do not fundraise and I do not have the means for that, nor the time. I am solely dependent on DOCS funding.

**The Hon. Dr ARTHUR CHESTERFIELD-EVANS:** Do you think that you are adequately co-ordinating all this lot? Presumably they only drop in sometimes, do they, in that they are not geographically based with you? They could presumably function in some fashion without contacting you at all, could they not?

**Ms FOGARTY:** They could use the hall. I guess I am a little bit confused about when you say to me "co-ordinating". I actually co-ordinate the service, but I also do community development. My task is—

**CHAIR:** I think we should go back to the beginning. Both of them are members of the interagency group, so they both, if you like, run the centre or run the schools as community is part of it. But then, on top of that—

**Ms FOGARTY:** We have other roles.

**CHAIR:**—they are obviously very important members of the interagency group which is trying to pull the NGO activities together.

**Ms WATSON:** We are very separate in that for instance I am based at the school and I run a family centre. I am funded equally by health, education, housing and community services. I run a lot of programs—things like playgroups, parenting courses, transition to school programs, literacy programs, health and lifestyle programs—and that all happens from two little disused classrooms at the Curran Public School. I develop partnerships with organisations like Burnside, the Benevolent Society, the Department of Health, to come in.

I suppose I am like a broker who gets those agencies to come in and provide programs. I get no program funding at all. The only thing that is funded in the SaCC program is the position of facilitator, nothing else. The 25 or 30 programs that I am providing are all basically done in partnerships with other agencies. If the community identifies an issue or a concern that was something they would like to see happen, it would be then my responsibility, the same as it would be Trisha's, to network with Burnside, Work Ventures, Mission Australia Employment, whoever, TAFE to say that the community would like to have a first aid course. So I would be setting up a process of developing a partnership with TAFE and saying, "Can you provide a lecturer to do the first aid program at Curran in the family centre or at the fields neighbourhood centre?"

That is how we would work. The inter-agency group meets once a month. That is the venue and arena in which we exchange information and make plans about possible services and programs that we would like to offer. But we are very separate, individual organisations or agencies, all with very different funding streams and funding bodies.

**The Hon. Dr ARTHUR CHESTERFIELD-EVANS:** If you found a kid was truanting, you would refer it to someone, and if they then found that was a result of domestic violence that would pull in someone else. If you said that was happening often, you would have a program for that region and someone would work it out. What is the process by which it is identified, registered, farmed out and then put in a broader picture for a future action?

**Ms WATSON:** Do you want to use truancy as the example?

**The Hon. Dr ARTHUR CHESTERFIELD-EVANS:** Yes, otherwise it becomes an exercise in management gobbledegook.

**Ms WATSON:** In the context of truancy, I would contact one of the schools, either Guise or Curran. I tend to work within the target group of children zero to eight, or the Primary Connect Program, which is eight to 12. I would be contacted by the school, or perhaps by DOCS. They would tell me there is a child who is not attending school and they would ask me what I knew about the family; that is, whether the family is involved in any of the programs that I provide through the school. I would have a conversation with the home-school liaison officer, who works with children who are truanting. We would look together at the possibility of pulling in support from a family support organisation, like the Northern Campbelltown Family Support Service, to see whether it could provide support for the family. We would look at making a home visit to the family with perhaps a family support worker or a home-school liaison officer. I might go along if I have a contact or association with that family in an attempt to bring the child back into school.

We would also be looking at what programs already exist. Reference was made the program for older children in high school who do not fit comfortably into the mainstream schooling system. There is also a program run through Glenfield for younger children who have consistently truanted, which has led to suspension—

**CHAIR:** The department ran through these.

**Ms WATSON:** —into those sorts of programs. If that is an issue that is presenting itself on a larger scale, we would network, sit down and arrange a meeting with school principals—which has been done—family support services, like Burnside, the Fields Neighbourhood Centre, my program and TAFE, and have a discussion about possibilities for programs to look at reducing the number of children truanting. Then it would be a question of looking at funding sources, whether they are Federal, State or private enterprise, such as foundations and grants. A program would then be put in place. That has just happened at Macquarie Fields with a partnership between James Meehan and the Salvation Army, which will setting up a centre working with children who are suspended and who

have high truancy rates. That process will hopefully result in the establishment of a program. I do not know if that is helpful.

**The Hon. Dr ARTHUR CHESTERFIELD-EVANS:** So, when you hear about the truancy, do you send off a bunch of emails to people, or do you make phone calls and gradually escalate if the problem is not solved? Between the small thing and the grand vision, which sounds like a year's work for a dozen people—

**Ms FOGARTY:** It is.

**The Hon. Dr ARTHUR CHESTERFIELD-EVANS:** —there must be some point at which you say that this is enough for this situation.

**Ms FOGARTY:** It could be raised as an issue through the MIG, and we work on that from there. One of the reasons we do that is to cut down duplication. That is the reason we would raise it at the MIG. We would find out from the MIG who was interested and see who had some money. We might be able to run some short-term programs or it may need a long-term program. The planning and mapping would be done there.

**The Hon. Dr ARTHUR CHESTERFIELD-EVANS:** Did you say that that is a monthly meeting?

**Ms FOGARTY:** We meet every month. If it were a very big issue that needed to be worked on quickly then the MIG would see how best to address it with the available resources.

**The Hon. Dr ARTHUR CHESTERFIELD-EVANS:** Presumably you would ring one or two people who are the most likely suspects to put a plan in place between now and the next monthly meeting.

**Ms FOGARTY:** I coordinate the list. We have more than 30 people on the mailing list, but not everyone attends. I send out the information to everyone on the mailing list. If the issue were something like truancy, I would include that as an agenda item. Those people who believe that that fits into their funding scope would come. They may not attend the MIG on a regular basis, but if it is something that relates to their core business, they will email me to say that they will attend the meeting and provide certain information.

**Ms WATSON:** We have two streams. We work with the family and the child who needs assistance. That is, direct case management. If it is a problem that has been identified by organisations and the community as a larger community-based problem, we would be pulling in that whole process of inter-agency collaboration, developing partnerships, looking for funding and developing a program. There are two different streams of assistance being provided: direct to a family and looking at whether it is a community-based issue that needs to be addressed.

**The Hon. Dr ARTHUR CHESTERFIELD-EVANS:** Do you think this is adequately co-ordinated?

**Ms FOGARTY:** We have limited resources and we do the best that we can.

**The Hon. KAYEE GRIFFIN:** I refer back to the operation of neighbourhood centre. As part of your funding you rent office space, I presume in the neighbourhood centre.

**Ms FOGARTY:** And the hall to run programs.

**The Hon. KAYEE GRIFFIN:** Is anyone else based there?

**Ms FOGARTY:** No, there is not a lot of room for anyone else. I have outreach programs. At the moment, I have the breakthrough program and another work-for-the-dole scheme. There is a room at the back which they use for one-on-one interviews with young people to help them to get employment. I cannot think of the other organisations. Burnside might ask to run a parenting group in

the hall, and I would provide whatever facilities they need. I might run a TAFE course there. Again, I would co-ordinate that.

**The Hon. KAYEE GRIFFIN:** Do the youth workers work at a different centre?

**Ms FOGARTY:** Yes. I am a generalist; I do not deal specifically with families, young people or the aged. I am a neighbourhood centre worker for the whole community. That is why I do bits and pieces.

**The Hon. KAYEE GRIFFIN:** But Campbelltown council owns the building that you work in?

**Ms FOGARTY:** That is correct.

**The Hon. KAYEE GRIFFIN:** What about the youth centre?

**Ms FOGARTY:** That is a council building as well.

**The Hon. KAYEE GRIFFIN:** Young people have said that they are concerned about the amount of time the other centre was available to them. Do you have any comments about that?

**Ms WATSON:** The youth centre at Macquarie Fields has had a very chequered history. Over the past eight years there have been long periods when it has been dysfunctional to the point of being closed. They have also had enormous difficulty in getting suitably skilled and trained staff to work effectively as youth workers. Responsibility for youth services has been taken over by Campbelltown Youth Services. It is responsible for providing services and programs and council maintains ownership of the facility. The world of youth work and centres is a minefield. It is very complex. A new worker has just come on board at the youth centre. I think she will become a very proactive worker in the area.

We have had enormous difficulties in terms of having enough programs available to youth coming from the youth centre. We have also had a youth worker away from work with a broken leg. Quite often the youth centre, due to salary conditions and restrictions, can be open only during certain times of the day. There have been issues but it is something that is not just a situation that occurs in Macquarie Fields, youth centres struggle with that. It has been a very rocky road in the past 10 years for the youth centre.

**The Hon. KAYEE GRIFFIN:** The youth centre is in a council-owned building, but the council does not fund the youth centre?

**Ms WATSON:** No. That is DOCS money and it is managed and auspiced by the Campbelltown Youth Services, I do not know whether there is some FACS money in there as well. They run four youth centres.

**Ms FOGARTY:** Airds, Minto, Macquarie Fields and Raby.

**Ms WATSON:** They provide services for four youth centres I think, but do not quote me on that, it is not my service.

**The Hon. KAYEE GRIFFIN:** There is funding for only one youth worker in relation to the youth centre?

**Ms FOGARTY:** One and a half.

**Ms WATSON:** They fund 1.5. But there again Campbelltown Youth Services, I suppose, has the flexibility to determine how many hours are allocated for each area.

**Ms FOGARTY:** It is a very complex system.

**Ms WATSON:** And there have been issues. We see wonderful prospects of improvement on the horizon.

**The Hon. KAYEE GRIFFIN:** The council in the area provides the building, not funding, not even the cost of the workers?

**Ms WATSON:** No.

**Ms FOGARTY:** They have separate funding. Campbelltown council has a youth worker but she works across the whole LGA. She would tap into Campbelltown Youth Services but they are two separate identities.

**Ms WATSON:** The youth centre would have access to things like the council community grants program, under which they can apply for small amounts of funding, which they have done in the past for specific events or equipment. But the council does not fund directly for programs or services.

**Ms FOGARTY:** Or manage.

**The Hon. KAYEE GRIFFIN:** With the new person who is on board, what hours will the centre operate?

**Ms FOGARTY:** She is the half-worker.

**Ms WATSON:** She is part time. I cannot address that issue about her hours. I know that at the moment they are trying very hard to look at providing services outside normal hours. It is between 7.00 a.m. and 9.00 a.m. that kids might need services, or between 5.00 p.m. and 7.00 p.m., not necessarily that core 9.00 a.m. to 5.00 p.m.

**Ms FOGARTY:** Last year I had a change of auspice, that is why I have the change of name. The Junction, my current auspice, also has supported Macquarie Fields in particular since may.

**CHAIR:** Who is The Junction? Who runs it?

**Ms FOGARTY:** It is The Junction Works, Marie Mullins is the chief executive officer.

**CHAIR:** Is it a non-government organisation?

**Ms FOGARTY:** Yes, it is. It is managed by a community organisation, community based. It started at Austral, but I have tapped into its youth services and have been able to bring programs into Macquarie Fields. The biggest gap in the community tells me about is the 12 to 15 year olds in particular. Last year we ran some programs from the neighbourhood centre for 12 to 15 year olds. They also did a project, which could have been just before the riots, of a video on domestic violence, they did that to music. They did that at James Meahan High School.

**The Hon. KAYEE GRIFFIN:** I was asking about the youth centre hours because young people have commented to the Committee that there were problems. I understand, as you have said, that there were issues about servicing the youth centre. Your point picks up that it was not open at times that young people wanted to use it, as opposed to the hours that other people thought it should be open.

**Ms FOGARTY:** But it is an identifiable gap that we have picked up on.

**CHAIR:** There are three major areas that have not been touched on. Jan, earlier you spoke about the intergenerational issues that went a long way beyond employment. That would cover the Committee's question number four about the underlying causes and problems of the disturbances. The Committee would like your comment about the media. We have heard quite a bit today about that. We would also like your comment about relationships between residents, particularly young people, and the police and how that fed into the disturbances and how it has gone since.

**Ms FOGARTY:** I was the worker that Jane McIvor was talking about earlier. I have had wonderful experiences with the media. Because of my location they were based right outside the front of the centre, because there is a car park there. Following the disturbances the media crucified the public housing community, blaming the already entrenched negative stereotype that the community has endured for years. There were many incidences of unethical and unprofessional behaviour on the part of some members of the media.

The media actually offered money, alcohol and cigarettes to minors in exchange for information, or for them to behave badly for negative photo opportunities. The media were confident in their assumption that they were accountable to no-one. When I pointed out that that was actually illegal, one just said, "Well, prove it." That was very difficult at that time.

**CHAIR:** How young were the kids the media were approaching?

**Ms FOGARTY:** Under 15 and some were even younger than that.

**Ms WATSON:** During the couple of weeks after the disturbances some parents were very uncomfortable with allowing their children to be out on the streets at all, even in front of their homes, because media were going around in cars and stopping when they saw groups of children, even if they were very young, say eight or nine, in the front gardens of their homes. The media went up to them and asked to take their photos. To the older children they offered money or whatever. It was incredibly unprofessional and unethical. You could not leave the kids alone because in a snap a swarm of cars would stop, media people would pop out and talk to and harass the kids. They particularly targeted little children, as young as eight. It was quite appalling.

**Ms FOGARTY:** Some media pretended they were students and so forth and were wanting to interview the residents who may have been attending a group or meeting at the centre. They would say, "We are students from Melbourne doing a thesis and just happen to be in the Macquarie Fields area. Do you want to make any comment on the family or about who was involved in what was going on?"

**CHAIR:** Did you recognise them as media?

**Ms FOGARTY:** At first I did not but it was just lucky I was suspicious. I started asking a few questions and their answers were not gelling. I realised that they were media after that. It was very difficult. When I did have students come, I ask them for their identity, to make sure who they were. We were not commenting to the media because they were not giving a balanced picture of what was happening. The community asked us not to respond because they were quite embarrassed about everything that was going on as well. So out of respect for the community, we said we would not respond to the media.

**CHAIR:** Do you think the media actually made the disturbances bigger than they were?

**Ms WATSON:** Definitely.

**Ms FOGARTY:** Definitely. The car park I am talking about—you would probably get about 20 cars in there; it is quite a big car park. But you could not find room. They had their television crews, they had their vans, and they had their cars of media. Because the young children were not sleeping at night, they were not going to school in the morning, and they would all just come up there and hang around because it was exciting for them. And the media were playing on that; they were banking on that to happen. The parents were very fearful. There was a very clear line of right and wrong.

The community members were frightened to say how they felt about what was happening because, as I said, people were taking negative stands about what was happening and some people were feeling that if they voiced what they were feeling, somehow they might be ostracised or condemned for that. They were very fearful for their children, because kids do not realise. For example, a simple comment could be blown out and there could be repercussions from that from their neighbours and so forth. That is why the community themselves, particularly mums, were coming up



to me and they were really frightened about perhaps what their young child might say because they did not want that to get back to a particular family.

**Ms WATSON:** The other point that is important to mention is that Macquarie Fields has never been viewed in a positive light by the media. This is not something that has just happened because of the disturbances. Yes, it brought that media attention directly to Macquarie Fields. I wish I had a dollar for every time I saw "Macquarie Fields man ...", "Macquarie Fields resident ..." or "Macquarie Fields child caught doing such and such". When do you see "St Ives or Darling Point mother stopped for DUI"? Hardly ever.

On a personal level, when I am watching the news, I wait for it. When they have the opening by-line "There was a knife attack ...", or whatever, I wait for the words, and here it comes—"... in southwest Sydney". That is something that has been happening for a long, long time. That is one of the reasons you have a community that is so stigmatised by the outside community, because it has been there, subtly pushing away, for many, many years. Being a public housing tenant, being a dole bludger—it has been there for a long time. It is just that, with the death of the young men, the car accident, and then the riots, the feeding frenzy started. And it continues today.

Channel seven, in its promotions of its news programs, flashed back to the scenes in Rosewood Drive, with the kids hurling the Molotov cocktails. That was six or seven months after the riots, and yet still it was there. They said, "Let's just have another subtle dig." It has been going on for a very, very long time. Unfortunately, the media feel that, at the end of the day, they are accountable to no-one, and that they have licences to present news stories in the light they see fit, which is not necessarily an accurate and true representation of what has happened. That is what has happened at Macquarie Fields.

They have been filming homes that have been disused and are about to be demolished, and depicting them as if they are typical homes. They have been marked for demolition for the last year and a half, but they are presented as homes where people live. With sensational pictures, they pose young children behind fences, which were there to keep kids out of homes that were going to be demolished, there again giving the impression of "this poor little child behind defence lives in this dreadful house". It is not a balanced view at all. Yet, the community has to live with that, day in and day out.

**CHAIR:** And the stigmatisation contributes?

**Ms WATSON:** Yes. And they become even further ostracised from the general community. One of the other aspects is that the estate community is really quite a tight-knit group. One of the reasons they are tight-knit is that they are stigmatised and ostracised. It is a community that is very proud of themselves—not because they chuck bottles or confront police, but there is a resilience in the community that has developed over years and years, even though it is a transient population, because it is an "us and them" situation. That is perpetuated by the media.

**CHAIR:** You said at the very beginning that it was an artificial and transient community. But some of that pride and "us and them" feeling—

**Ms WATSON:** That sort of stigmatisation gels them together, whether that is good or bad. But there is a resilience that comes from it as well.

**The Hon. IAN WEST:** The negative side of that, unfortunately, can be that they live up to the image?

**Ms WATSON:** Exactly. The other problem in being an artificial community is: Where are the positive role models? One of the aspects within my program that is a success but also is detrimental to the community is that we work on strengthening families, giving them employment options and opportunities. When those families are strengthened, parenting skills are up, the kids are going to school, dad or mum has gotten a job, they then leave the estate and go to private housing. It is like having a family graduate.

**CHAIR:** And you lose them?

**Ms WATSON:** And we lose them—and that wonderful, positive role model. Normally you will have either the parent or parents being members of the community or on the P&C, who come and help out at the community luncheons that happen at the neighbourhood centre, who are there for the barbecues, who are there for the neighbourhood clean-ups. They are the positive role models. But what we are working towards is having them leave the estate and go into the outside world.

**CHAIR:** Do the people in the private housing in Macquarie Fields and the people in the Department of Housing estate interrelate and produce the kind of community sense and role models you are talking about?

**Ms WATSON:** There are three communities within Macquarie Fields. You have the private sector in Macquarie Fields, on the housing estate you have Macquarie Fields housing estate heights, and then you have Macquarie Fields housing estate.

**CHAIR:** This morning the departmental witnesses said that Curran and Guise are quite different, although they are so close together.

**Ms WATSON:** Curran is not in Macquarie Fields heights, let us say. The areas are defined by the fact that on the Curran side of the estate, or the low side of the estate, you have a large number of townhouses, which should never have been built. It is very small, cramped housing; it is very dense. Whereas in Macquarie Fields heights, which is the Guise side of the estate, which was built first, you have the individual cottages and homes. So it has a different feel. When you drive from one side of the estate to the other, it is really quite different in terms of what exists there.

I am pleased to say that with the SAP program, because we offer such a unique, structured playgroup program, which people in the private sector cannot find anywhere else, we have people from the private sector come to the playgroup and they are then involved in the different things we provide, whether it is parenting programs, workshops, or whatever. But, for the most part, there is a clear division between public housing tenants and the private sector. But we do see private sector people sometimes coming into some of the community events that we have, for example, community fun days. We had a very large community expo at Curran at the end of last year, with service providers. We had about 4,000 people, and a lot of them came from the private sector as well as the estate.

There will always be that division. I would be naive to say that one day we will all be happy families. While you have an artificial community, and families with high needs and multiple issues, and you have the private sector, I think there will always be that division—unless we have an integration on the estate where you have equal numbers of homeowners and people who are public housing tenants.

**Ms FOGARTY:** We do have a small pocket of that, and that is because of the partnerships.

**CHAIR:** So from that point of view the move is towards breaking up estates and mixing public and private housing, and so on?

**Ms WATSON:** That is what we are hoping.

**CHAIR:** It will achieve some good things.

**The Hon. IAN WEST:** A return to the future?

**Ms WATSON:** Perhaps. We have been talking about that in the area of housing for 11 years, so maybe one day.

**CHAIR:** You have already hinted at relationships with police and so on. What else do you want to say about that?

**Ms WATSON:** There again, like the youth centre, there is a colourful and chequered history in relationships between youth and the police, and the community and the police. Over the years a lot of that has been dependent on—

**CHAIR:** The superintendent?

**Ms WATSON:** The attitude of the local area commander. That individual's views are about community development and engaging the community. What has also been connected to that is the duration in which an individual area commander stays in the position. I have seen so many come and go.

**CHAIR:** How many in 11 years?

**Ms WATSON:** You just lose track. You have an area commander over a period of, say, nine months or a year and then you sort of start to think, "They are getting it; they are understanding. We are working in a forward direction." You then go down to the police station a week later and they are gone.

**Ms FOGARTY:** I can tell you that in three years there have been four.

**Ms WATSON:** So you start the process again of engaging the local area commander. I think not having stability down at the Macquarie Fields station and particularly in the role of area commander has made it quite confusing for the community and also probably quite confusing for staff and police at the station. Prior to the disturbances there was very much a siege mentality between the community and the police service. I think there was a sense, particularly amongst the youth, that they were being unfairly harassed and targeted. There was also a sense within the community that when they were presenting at the police station they were not treated with the respect that they felt they deserved, and that their concerns were not taken seriously.

I think there was that sense of being discounted. So the relationship prior to the disturbances was not a healthy one. It had not been healthy for quite a while. There was that up and down peak and trough, depending on who the local area commander was. There was also concern in the community that when requests were made for assistance with domestic violence and public disturbances, or whatever in the streets, the police were not responding. People were waiting and waiting, and squad cars never came. There was also a concern, particularly amongst women, that police were handling domestic violence situations inappropriately.

There was also a concern by parents that when an adolescent was picked up, on whatever charge it might have been, it was not being handled appropriately. There were enormous misconceptions on both parts. I find it interesting when I heard the police talking about the community. They were echoing the same statements that the community were making about the police. That was very interesting. They did not understand one another's cultures. There was not enough effort made on either part—the youth and the community, and also the police—perhaps to be more open and understanding of the cultures and how they work.

**CHAIR:** Has that got any better since?

**Ms FOGARTY:** It has certainly improved. One of the issues that happened at the height of the riot was that a lot of police were brought in from out of the area. So the local guys did not get to handle a lot of that. So the breakdown happened because of the outside police. What I found interesting is that when they left, the local guys were the ones to pick up the pieces. I know that Chris Cotter was mentioned earlier. Young people were coming up to me at the height of the riot and saying things like, "We are not targeting him because we know him and he is a good guy." For me that just emphasised the fact that building up a rapport with the community and particularly young people is what is going to work.

There was no communication. At the height of the riot nobody tried to talk to young people. The young people were out the front because the media were there. There were all these rumours going around and not one person was talking to the young people about addressing some of those rumours and so forth. I called on Chris Cotter. There was a rumour going round that the police

actually forced a car into a tree and they were angry about it. Chris spoke to about 12 of these kids, showed them the car, they sat down and talked, and then they walked away. So there was no communication at that time.

Since the riots the police have made an effort to communicate with young people. It is great that they are doing that now, but at the height of the riots that would have been terrific. There was no communication happening. There was no-one talking to community leaders to involve them and to try to sort out the mess. They just kept bringing in more and more police. If they had sat down with community leaders and with young people, all they needed was some answers. People might have thought that their questions did not need to be answered, but all these rumours were running around and young people needed answers at that time.

As I said, the police have made an effort to do that. They have been involved in community luncheons, in barbecues and in Harmony Day. We had a big community expo at Curran Public School last year, which they attended. At the end of last year new recruits came in from Goulburn. Again Chris organised for them to come in and to meet not only local services but also local community members. I do not know whether that is a normal thing but I thought it was a positive step. But it needs to be continuous; it needs to be encouraged all the time.

Depending on the people you talk to in the police force, they will say to you—because I have said this to them before—"We are law enforcement officers." I say, "Yes, that is true but to make your job easier it would be great if you could build up this rapport with the community and community leaders." They are in contact more so than we are with the young people. As I said, I guess it is difficult for them because they are juggling their core business as well. A few people within the force are trying to do that.

**Ms WATSON:** There has been definite improvement. One point that I will make is that in many ways the police are underresourced. You have heard a lot about the wonderful Chris Cotter.

**CHAIR:** And we met Chris.

**Ms WATSON:** For more than a year we have been trying to get Chris a car.

**CHAIR:** We heard that when we were there.

**Ms WATSON:** I have knocked on every door and I have gone to each of my funding departments and said, "Surely there has to be a spare small car somewhere in New South Wales in between four government departments?" There is not. Little things like that would make an enormous difference to Chris being able to do his job better. But there have been enormous improvements with the change in area commander. I think the community is feeling that there is a higher profile of police. I think they are feeling that there will be much more of a dialogue between the community and the police.

Things like the camp and the youth committee that have been set up by the police will go a long way towards encouraging better relationships between the community and the police. When you talk about how relationships could be improved, one thing we really would like to see in the future is community representation on the selection of the local area commander. It is important and it would really make a difference. We also need some guarantee from the police service that the local area commander will be stationed there for a significant period. We do not want the commander to be stationed for six months, then somebody else for 1½ years, and somebody else for three months. That causes significant instability in the community. Also that point that Tricia touched upon is having adequate training for recruits who come to the area, and having that opportunity to talk and meet with members in the community and service providers who can skill them up in terms of community engagement and help them understand the complexities of the community that they are going to be doing their law enforcement in.

**CHAIR:** We have not asked you our last question, although I think you have hinted several times what you would like to see come out of the inquiry. We have probably touched on most of the others. If you find from your notes that we have really left something out you can give us your notes or Katherine can talk to you next week or some time because we would hate to think that you have

gone to a lot of trouble for us and then we have got sidetracked and have not got to something. What do you want us to do? What do you want to come out of the inquiry?

**Ms WATSON:** What is the wish list?

**CHAIR:** Yes.

**Ms WATSON:** I think that having that effective locality planning with council, government departments and NGOs is important. I do not have the answer, but somehow connecting those three tiers that I spoke about with regard to looking at effective integrated planning. I do not have the answer if someone says, "How do you do that?" I have some ideas but probably not a really good one. That would be something that is very important. Also, improved local services for youth. They are quite often forgotten, particularly that 12 to 16-year-old group who constantly get bypassed. And that other issue of having the services there when they are needed. Having a youth centre that is open when kids are at school—what is the point? It needs to be there on weekends; it needs to be there after hours so that kids can actually access the services.

Also, another enormous issue is the fact that we do not have appropriate counselling services within the Macquarie Fields area, particularly in the area of mental health. Mental health issues underpin so many of the difficulties that families encounter and we just do not have mental health services available. And what does exist in Campbelltown the waiting lists are obscene, for want of a better word.

**Ms FOGARTY:** Or they cost a substantial sum of money.

**Ms WATSON:** And depression and also diagnosable mental illnesses are rampant on the estate and they are not being addressed. They not only affect the individual but they are affecting the family, the children and the community as a whole. That gap has been there since I started 11 years ago.

**Ms FOGARTY:** And also since the riots, in particular with what happened there, there are a lot of children that are traumatised by it—young people—and there has been no counselling set up for them at all and families are still saying that if helicopters go by their young children get frightened by that because for a week that was happening. I went home that night so I could sleep, but people were living with that 24/7, and families still say to me they do not know how to do that. Even young kids, if they see a group of police, in particular if they are in their riot gear and so forth, they instantly shake and say, "Cops are going to kill us", because that is what was happening at that time. So there has been no incidental counselling or anything for those families since then.

**Ms WATSON:** And during the public disturbances I went in on Saturday and Sunday and opened up the school because the community wanted somewhere to go and debrief and I was basically it. That need still exists, and I am not supposed to be there as a councillor. Even though I am qualified that is not part of my job, but there is a community who is crying out for it, so they still need it desperately. The other two things were an increase in locally-based services, particularly in the area of early intervention. It is certainly evident that we need youth services provided, but if we look at it rationally why do we not work more effectively with these children when they are young? Then perhaps we will not have a need for the high level of intervention when they are 16, 17, 18, 19, 20. Let us get the focus right and also just commonsense and all the evidence-based stuff that is coming out, the intervention dollar is a far better way to spend your dollar than in crisis further down the track.

**Ms FOGARTY:** Just on that, what has happened in the climate now is that large organisations are the ones that are getting the dollars and small organisations, particularly locally-based organisations, are just fielded out because the larger organisations are getting those dollars.

**Ms WATSON:** And they do not quite often know the intricacies and the characteristics that are particular to that community. One thing that has been very evident in the 11 years that I have been at Macquarie Fields is it is the services that are actually based there that people know, that they trust, that they can see Monday to Friday, achieve the successful outcomes. Outreach-based services where someone just comes in for an hour a week or two hours a week to just run one program, the

community looks at them and says, "Who are you? We don't know you. Why should we trust you?" So that is also a very critical point.

Also, that issue around let's be sensible and have adequate resourcing for programs and let's have funding that gives programs a chance to succeed. There again, I am getting wealthier by the moment every time I am saying if I had a dollar for something. If I had a dollar for every program that I came and saw that was funded for a year and then disappeared I would not be here today, I would be in the north of Italy.

**CHAIR:** That comment gets major just about every inquiry this Committee conducts.

**Ms WATSON:** It is cheaper to fund programs for just a year or six months or two years. I can tell you from my experience that it took me almost three years to gain the trust of the community and to be viewed as being a useful service. It does not happen overnight in communities where there is such a high degree of distrust of organisations.

**Ms FOGARTY:** It took me two years.

**Ms WATSON:** The last point is, we received further funding and assistance in developing an action plan and looking at that whole question of effective planning for the community, because it is very hard for part-time workers and sole workers to do that alone. That is about it.

**CHAIR:** Thank you for staying so long and for being so honest and caring and missing the festival to come here. You are our last witnesses in this inquiry. You have been very good people to finish with in giving the Committee your knowledge of Macquarie Fields. If you realise or we realise that we ran out of time and we skipped over something, Katherine can contact you, or vice versa.

**(The witnesses withdrew)**

**(The Committee adjourned at 4.17 p.m.)**